



POLICY SUBJECT:

EFFECTIVE DATE: 08/12/2011

Consultation Documentation and Billing

*To be reviewed every three years by
General Counsel*

Policy on Consultation Documentation and Billing

Purpose

This policy defines a consultation and outlines the proper documentation for billing consultation services.

Definitions

1. Consultation - A consultation is an Evaluation and Management Service (*E/M*) that is provided upon the specific request of a physician, qualified non-physician provider (NPP), or other appropriate source (e.g. lawyer, insurance company) who is asking for the consulting physician to either recommend care for a specific condition or problem or to determine whether to accept responsibility for ongoing management of the patient's entire care or for the care of a specific condition or problem. This advice, recommendation, suggestion, direction, counselor opinion regarding the evaluation and/or management of a specific problem is because the consultant has expertise in a specific medical area beyond the requestor's knowledge.

2. Transfer of Care - A service is considered a transfer of care when a physician or qualified NPP is requesting that the Sound Physicians' provider take over the responsibility for managing the patient's complete care for the condition. The requestor is not intending to personally treat or continue to treat the patient for that condition. The requestor is not asking for an opinion or advice. The requestor should provide an explanation of the reason transfer of care is being sought.

Policy:

1. Sound Physicians provide consultation services upon request by a physician or qualified non-physician provider (NPP). Requests to assume care for a patient or a specific aspect of the patient's care are considered to be requests for transfer of care and not consultations. It is important for the requestor to be clear in communicating why he or she is sending a patient to another physician.

2. Sound Physicians applies a uniform documentation standard for documentation of all services, but bills according to specific payer requirements. Medicare requirements previous to January 1, 2010 are not used to define standards for billing consultation services for subsequent dates of service.
3. Consultations require documentation of all three of the following:
 - a. a. An appropriate source must **REQUEST** the Sound Physicians' provider's opinion or advice regarding management options.
 - b. b. The **REASON** for the consultation must be documented in the medical record (i.e., Why is the consultant seeing the patient?).
 - c. c. The Sound Physicians' consulting physician must provide the requestor with a written **REPORT** of his/her findings and recommendations, which includes the request for consultation and is documented in the patient's medical record.
4. Consultations are not to be reported when the request is initiated by a patient and/or his or her family. Report these services using office visit E/M codes, when appropriate.
5. Consultations may not be performed as a shared service with an NPP. However, NPPs may perform consultations independently.
6. A Sound Physicians' practitioner may initiate diagnostic or therapeutic services at the same visit or a subsequent visit. When a consultant provides care after a consultation, that care does not constitute another consultation. For example, an internist identifies a skin lesion on a patient, and seeks consultation from a dermatologist because evaluation of the skin lesion is outside the internist's knowledge. The dermatologist examines the patient and decides that the lesion should be removed, and she removes it on the same day. The dermatologist dictates a consultation report into the shared record, directed to the internist. The consultation is billed separately from the procedure of removing the lesion, using the appropriate modifier.

Procedure

1. Requestor's Documentation - The written or verbal request for consult may be made by a physician or other appropriate source and documented in the patient's medical record by either the consulting physician or requesting physician or appropriate source.
 - a. Best practice is for the requesting physician to document the request in his or her note as documentation of the request should be readily available in the medical record.
 - b. Consultations cannot be requested as a standing order or routine practice among Sound Physicians' providers.
2. Consultant's Documentation - After the consultation is provided, the consulting provider must prepare a written report of his/her findings and recommendations, which shall be provided to the requestor. The report may be provided as a separate document or, when between Sound Physicians' providers, be included in a shared medical record.