



## **Summary of Policies in the Calendar Year (CY) 2019 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) Final Rule, Telehealth Originating Site Facility Fee Payment Amount and Telehealth Services List, CT Modifier Reduction List, and Preventive Services List**

MLN Matters Number: MM11063

Related Change Request (CR) Number: 11063

Related CR Release Date: November 30, 2018

Effective Date: January 1, 2019

Related CR Transmittal Number: R4176CP

Implementation Date: January 7, 2019

### **PROVIDER TYPES AFFECTED**

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This MLN Matters Article is intended for physicians and other providers who submit claims to Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) for services paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) and provided to Medicare beneficiaries.

### **PROVIDER ACTION NEEDED**

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CR 11063 provides a summary of policies in the Calendar Year (CY) 2019 MPFS Final Rule and announces the Telehealth Originating Site Facility Fee payment amount and makes other policy changes related to Medicare Part B payment. These changes are applicable to services furnished in CY 2019. Make sure your billing staffs are aware of these updates.

### **BACKGROUND**

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Section 1848(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (the Act) requires the Secretary to establish by regulation a fee schedule of payment amounts for physicians' services for the subsequent year. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) final rule (Regulation number CMS-1693-F) that updates payment policies and Medicare payment rates for services furnished by physicians and Nonphysician Practitioners (NPPs) that are paid under the MPFS in CY 2019 went on display on November 1, 2018. The final rule also addresses public comments on Medicare payment policies proposed earlier this year. The following summarizes the key provisions of this final rule.

## **Streamlining Evaluation and Management (E/M) Payment and Reducing Clinician Burden**

For CY 2019 and CY 2020, CMS will continue the current coding and payment structure for E/M office/outpatient visits and practitioners should continue to use either the 1995 or 1997 E/M documentation guidelines to document E/M office/outpatient visits billed to Medicare. For CY 2019 and beyond, CMS is finalizing the following policies:

- Elimination of the requirement to document the medical necessity of a home visit in lieu of an office visit
- For established patient office/outpatient visits, when relevant information is already contained in the medical record, practitioners may choose to focus their documentation on what has changed since the last visit, or on pertinent items that have not changed, and need not re-record the defined list of required elements if there is evidence that the practitioner reviewed the previous information and updated it as needed. Practitioners should still review prior data, update as necessary, and indicate in the medical record that they have done so.
- CMS is clarifying that for E/M office/outpatient visits, for new and established patients for visits, practitioners need not re-enter in the medical record information on the patient's chief complaint and history that has already been entered by ancillary staff or the beneficiary. The practitioner may simply indicate in the medical record that he or she reviewed and verified this information.
- Removal of potentially duplicative requirements for notations in medical records that may have previously been included in the medical records by residents or other members of the medical team for E/M visits furnished by teaching physicians.

Beginning in CY 2021, CMS will further reduce burden with the implementation of payment, coding, and other documentation changes. Payment for E/M office/outpatient visits will be simplified and payment would vary primarily based on attributes that do not require separate, complex documentation. Specifically for CY 2021, CMS is finalizing the following policies:

- Reduction in the payment variation for E/M office/outpatient visit levels by paying a single rate for E/M office/outpatient visit levels 2 through 4 for established and new patients while maintaining the payment rate for E/M office/outpatient visit level 5 in order to better account for the care and needs of complex patients
- Permitting practitioners to choose to document E/M office/outpatient level 2 through 5 visits using Medical Decision Making (MDM) or time instead of applying the current 1995 or 1997 E/M documentation guidelines, or alternatively practitioners could continue using the current framework
- Beginning in CY 2021, for E/M office/outpatient levels 2 through 5 visits, CMS will allow for flexibility in how visit levels are documented— specifically a choice to use the current framework, MDM, or time. For E/M office/outpatient level 2 through 4 visits, when using MDM or current framework to document the visit, CMS will also apply a minimum supporting documentation standard associated with level 2 visits. For these cases, Medicare would require information to support a level 2 E/M office/outpatient visit code for history, exam and/or MDM.

- When time is used to document, practitioners will document the medical necessity of the visit and that the billing practitioner personally spent the required amount of time face-to-face with the beneficiary.
- Implementation of add-on codes that describe the additional resources inherent in visits for primary care and particular kinds of non-procedural specialized medical care, though they would not be restricted by physician specialty. These codes would only be reportable with E/M office/outpatient level 2 through 4 visits, and their use generally would not impose new per-visit documentation requirements.
- Adoption of a new “extended visit” add-on code for use only with E/M office/outpatient level 2 through 4 visits to account for the additional resources required when practitioners need to spend extended time with the patient.

CMS believes these policies will allow practitioners greater flexibility to exercise clinical judgment in documentation, so they can focus on what is clinically relevant and medically necessary for the beneficiary. CMS intends to engage in further discussions with the public to potentially further refine the policies for CY 2021.

After consideration of concerns raised by commenters in response to the proposed rule, CMS is not finalizing aspects of the proposal that would have:

1. Reduced payment when E/M office/outpatient visits are furnished on the same day as procedures
2. Established separate coding and payment for podiatric E/M visits
3. Standardized the allocation of practice expense Relative Value Unit (RVUs) for the codes that describe these services

### **Modernizing Medicare Physician Payment by Recognizing Communication Technology-Based Services**

CMS is finalizing its proposals to pay separately for two newly defined physicians’ services furnished using communication technology:

- Brief communication technology-based service, for example, virtual check-in (Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) code G2012)
- Remote evaluation of recorded video and/or images submitted by an established patient (HCPCS code G2010)

CMS is also finalizing policies to pay separately for new coding describing chronic care remote physiologic monitoring (Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes 99453, 99454, and 99457) and interprofessional internet consultation (CPT codes 99451, 99452, 99446, 99447, 99448, and 99449).

### **Expanding the Use of Telehealth Services for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder and Other Substance Use Disorders**

Through an interim final rule with comment period, CMS is implementing a provision from the

Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act that removes the originating site geographic requirements and adds the home of an individual as a permissible originating site for telehealth services furnished for purposes of treatment of a substance use disorder or a co-occurring mental health disorder for services furnished on or after July 1, 2019.

### **Providing Practice Flexibility for Radiologist Assistants**

CMS is revising the physician supervision requirements so that diagnostic tests performed by a Radiologist Assistant (RA) that meets certain requirements, that would otherwise require a personal level of physician supervision as specified in its regulations, may be furnished under a direct level of physician supervision to the extent permitted by state law and state scope of practice regulations.

### **Discontinue Functional Status Reporting Requirements for Outpatient Therapy**

CMS is finalizing its proposal to discontinue the functional status reporting requirements for services furnished on or after January 1, 2019.

### **Outpatient Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Services Furnished by Therapy Assistants**

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 requires payment for services furnished in whole or in part by a therapy assistant at 85 percent of the applicable Part B payment amount for the service effective January 1, 2022. In order to implement this payment reduction, the law requires CMS to establish a new modifier by January 1, 2019, and CMS to detail its plans to accomplish this in the final rule.

CMS is finalizing its proposal to establish two new modifiers – one for Physical Therapy Assistants (PTA) and another for Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA) – when services are furnished in whole or in part by a PTA or OTA. However, CMS is finalizing the new modifiers as “payment” rather than as “therapy” modifiers, based on comments from stakeholders. These will be used alongside of the current PT and OT modifiers, instead of replacing them, which retains the use of the three existing therapy modifiers to report all PT, OT, and Speech Language Pathology (SLP) services, that have been used since 1998 to track outpatient therapy services that were subject to the therapy caps.

CMS is also finalizing a de minimis standard under which a service is furnished in whole or in part by a PTA or OTA when more than 10 percent of the service is furnished by the PTA or OTA, instead of the proposed definition that applied when a PTA or OTA furnished any minute of a therapeutic service. The new therapy modifiers for services furnished by PTAs and OTAs are not required on claims until January 1, 2020.

### **Practice Expense (PE): Market-Based Supply and Equipment Pricing Update**

CMS is finalizing the proposal to adopt updated direct PE input prices for supplies and

equipment. While CMS is adopting most of the prices for supplies and equipment as recommended by the contractor and included in the proposed rule, in the case of particular items, CMS is finalizing refinements to the proposed prices based on feedback from commenters. CMS is also finalizing its proposal to phase-in use of these new prices over a 4-year period beginning in CY 2019 to ensure a smooth transition.

### **Payment Rates for Non-excepted Off-campus Provider-Based Hospital Departments Paid Under the PFS**

Section 603 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 requires that certain items and services furnished by certain off-campus hospital outpatient provider-based departments are no longer paid under the Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) and are instead paid under the applicable payment system. In CY 2017, CMS finalized the PFS as the applicable payment system for most of these items and services.

Since CY 2017, payment for these items and services furnished in non-excepted off-campus provider-based departments has been made under the PFS using a PFS Relativity Adjuster based on a percentage of the OPPS payment rate. The PFS Relativity Adjuster in CY 2018 is 40 percent, meaning that non-excepted items and services are paid 40 percent of the amount that would have been paid for those services under the OPPS. CMS is finalizing that the PFS Relativity Adjuster remain at 40 percent for CY 2019. CMS believes that this PFS Relativity Adjuster encourages fairer competition between hospitals and physician practices by promoting greater payment alignment between outpatient care settings.

### **Medicare Telehealth Services**

For CY 2019, CMS is finalizing its proposals to add HCPCS codes G0513 and G0514 (Prolonged preventive service(s)) to the list of telehealth services.

CMS is also finalizing policies to implement the requirements of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 for telehealth services related to beneficiaries with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) receiving home dialysis and beneficiaries with acute stroke effective January 1, 2019. CMS is finalizing the addition of renal dialysis facilities and the homes of ESRD beneficiaries receiving home dialysis as originating sites, and to not apply originating site geographic requirements for hospital-based or critical access hospital-based renal dialysis centers, renal dialysis facilities, and beneficiary homes, for purposes of furnishing the home dialysis monthly ESRD-related clinical assessments.

CMS is also finalizing policies to add mobile stroke units as originating sites and not to apply originating site type or geographic requirements for telehealth services furnished for purposes of diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of symptoms of an acute stroke.

### **Telehealth origination site facility fee payment amount update**

Section 1834(m)(2)(B) of the Act establishes the payment amount for the Medicare telehealth originating site facility fee for telehealth services provided from October 1, 2001, through



December 31, 2002, at \$20. For telehealth services provided on or after January 1 of each subsequent calendar year, the telehealth originating site facility fee is increased by the percentage increase in the Medicare Economic Index (MEI) as defined in Section 1842(i)(3) of the Act. The MEI increase for 2019 is 1.5 percent. Therefore, for CY 2019, the payment amount for HCPCS code Q3014 (Telehealth originating site facility fee) is 80 percent of the lesser of the actual charge, or \$26.15. (The beneficiary is responsible for any unmet deductible amount and Medicare coinsurance.)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The official instruction, CR 11063, issued to your MAC regarding this change is available at <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/2018Downloads/R4176CP.pdf>.

If you have questions, your MACs may have more information. Find their website at <http://go.cms.gov/MAC-website-list>.

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date of Change	Description
December 3, 2018	Initial article released.

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