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CHAPTER IV
SURGERY: MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM
CPT CODES 20000-29999
FOR
NATIONAL CORRECT CODING INITIATIVE POLICY MANUAL FOR MEDICARE SERVICES

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Chapter IV
Surgery: Musculoskeletal System
CPT Codes 20000 - 29999

A. Introduction

The principles of correct coding discussed in Chapter I apply to the CPT codes in the range 20000-29999. Several general guidelines are repeated in this Chapter. However, those general guidelines from Chapter I not discussed in this Chapter are nonetheless applicable.

Physicians should report the HCPCS/CPT code that describes the procedure performed to the greatest specificity possible. A HCPCS/CPT code should be reported only if all services described by the code are performed. A physician should not report multiple HCPCS/CPT codes if a single HCPCS/CPT code exists that describes the services. This type of unbundling is incorrect coding.

HCPCS/CPT codes include all services usually performed as part of the procedure as a standard of medical/surgical practice. A physician should not separately report these services simply because HCPCS/CPT codes exist for them.

Specific issues unique to this section of CPT are clarified in this Chapter.

B. Evaluation and Management (E&M) Services

Medicare Global Surgery Rules define the rules for reporting evaluation and management (E&M) services with procedures covered by these rules. This section summarizes some of the rules.

All procedures on the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule are assigned a global period of 000, 010, 090, XXX, YYY, ZZZ, or MMM. The global concept does not apply to XXX procedures. The global period for YYY procedures is defined by the Carrier (A/B MAC processing practitioner service claims). All procedures with a global period of ZZZ are related to another procedure, and the applicable global period for the ZZZ code is determined by the related procedure. Procedures with a global period of MMM are maternity procedures.

Since NCCI PTP edits are applied to same day services by the same provider to the same beneficiary, certain Global Surgery Rules

are applicable to NCCI. An E&M service is separately reportable on the same date of service as a procedure with a global period of 000, 010, or 090 under limited circumstances.

If a procedure has a global period of 090 days, it is defined as a major surgical procedure. If an E&M is performed on the same date of service as a major surgical procedure for the purpose of deciding whether to perform this surgical procedure, the E&M service is separately reportable with modifier 57. Other preoperative E&M services on the same date of service as a major surgical procedure are included in the global payment for the procedure and are not separately reportable. NCCI does not contain edits based on this rule because Medicare Carriers (A/B MACs processing practitioner service claims) have separate edits.

If a procedure has a global period of 000 or 010 days, it is defined as a minor surgical procedure. In general E&M services on the same date of service as the minor surgical procedure are included in the payment for the procedure. The decision to perform a minor surgical procedure is included in the payment for the minor surgical procedure and should not be reported separately as an E&M service. However, a significant and separately identifiable E&M service unrelated to the decision to perform the minor surgical procedure is separately reportable with modifier 25. The E&M service and minor surgical procedure do not require different diagnoses. If a minor surgical procedure is performed on a new patient, the same rules for reporting E&M services apply. The fact that the patient is “new” to the provider is not sufficient alone to justify reporting an E&M service on the same date of service as a minor surgical procedure. NCCI contains many, but not all, possible edits based on these principles.

Example: If a physician determines that a new patient with head trauma requires sutures, confirms the allergy and immunization status, obtains informed consent, and performs the repair, an E&M service is not separately reportable. However, if the physician also performs a medically reasonable and necessary full neurological examination, an E&M service may be separately reportable.

For major and minor surgical procedures, postoperative E&M services related to recovery from the surgical procedure during the postoperative period are included in the global surgical package as are E&M services related to complications of the surgery. Postoperative visits unrelated to the diagnosis for

which the surgical procedure was performed unless related to a complication of surgery may be reported separately on the same day as a surgical procedure with modifier 24 ("Unrelated Evaluation and Management Service by the Same Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional During a Postoperative Period").

Procedures with a global surgery indicator of "XXX" are not covered by these rules. Many of these "XXX" procedures are performed by physicians and have inherent pre-procedure, intra-procedure, and post-procedure work usually performed each time the procedure is completed. This work should never be reported as a separate E&M code. Other "XXX" procedures are not usually performed by a physician and have no physician work relative value units associated with them. A physician should never report a separate E&M code with these procedures for the supervision of others performing the procedure or for the interpretation of the procedure. With most "XXX" procedures, the physician may, however, perform a significant and separately identifiable E&M service on the same date of service which may be reported by appending modifier 25 to the E&M code. This E&M service may be related to the same diagnosis necessitating performance of the "XXX" procedure but cannot include any work inherent in the "XXX" procedure, supervision of others performing the "XXX" procedure, or time for interpreting the result of the "XXX" procedure. Appending modifier 25 to a significant, separately identifiable E&M service when performed on the same date of service as an "XXX" procedure is correct coding.

C. Anesthesia

With limited exceptions Medicare Anesthesia Rules prevent separate payment for anesthesia for a medical or surgical procedure when provided by the physician performing the procedure. The physician should not report CPT codes 00100-01999, *62320-62327*, or 64400-64530 for anesthesia for a procedure. Additionally, the physician should not unbundle the anesthesia procedure and report component codes individually. For example, introduction of a needle or intracatheter into a vein (CPT code 36000), venipuncture (CPT code 36410), drug administration (CPT codes 96360-*96377*) or cardiac assessment (e.g., CPT codes 93000-93010, 93040-93042) should not be reported when these procedures are related to the delivery of an anesthetic agent.

Medicare allows separate reporting for moderate conscious sedation services (CPT codes *99151-99153*) when provided by the same physician performing a medical or surgical procedure.

Injections of local anesthesia for musculoskeletal procedures (surgical or manipulative) are not separately reportable. For example, CPT codes 20526-20553 (therapeutic injection of carpal tunnel, tendon sheath, ligament, muscle trigger points) should not be reported for the administration of local anesthesia to perform another procedure. The NCCI contains many edits based on this principle. If a procedure and a separate and distinct injection service unrelated to anesthesia for the former procedure are reported, the injection service may be reported with an NCCI-associated modifier if appropriate.

CPT codes 64450 (injection, anesthetic agent; other peripheral nerve or branch) and 64455 (injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, plantar common digital nerve(s) (e.g., Morton's neuroma)) should not be reported by a surgeon for anesthesia for a surgical procedure. If performed as a therapeutic or diagnostic injection unrelated to the surgical procedure, these codes may be reported separately.

D. Biopsy

A biopsy performed at the time of another more extensive procedure (e.g., excision, destruction, removal) is separately reportable under specific circumstances.

If the biopsy is performed on a separate lesion, it is separately reportable. This situation may be reported with anatomic modifiers or modifier 59.

If the biopsy is performed on the same lesion on which a more extensive procedure is performed, it is separately reportable only if the biopsy is utilized for immediate pathologic diagnosis prior to the more extensive procedure, and the decision to proceed with the more extensive procedure is based on the diagnosis established by the pathologic examination. The biopsy is not separately reportable if the pathologic examination at the time of surgery is for the purpose of assessing margins of resection or verifying resectability. When separately reportable modifier 58 may be reported to indicate that the biopsy and the more extensive procedure were planned or staged procedures.

If a biopsy is performed and submitted for pathologic evaluation that will be completed after the more extensive procedure is performed, the biopsy is not separately reportable with the more extensive procedure.

E. Arthroscopy

1. Surgical arthroscopy includes diagnostic arthroscopy which is not separately reportable. If a diagnostic arthroscopy leads to a surgical arthroscopy at the same patient encounter, only the surgical arthroscopy may be reported.

2. If an arthroscopy is performed as a “scout” procedure to assess the surgical field or extent of disease, it is not separately reportable. If the findings of a diagnostic arthroscopy lead to the decision to perform an open procedure, the diagnostic arthroscopy may be separately reportable. Modifier 58 may be reported to indicate that the diagnostic arthroscopy and non-arthroscopic therapeutic procedures were staged or planned procedures. The medical record must indicate the medical necessity for the diagnostic arthroscopy.

3. If an arthroscopic procedure is converted to an open procedure, only the open procedure may be reported. Neither a surgical arthroscopy nor a diagnostic arthroscopy code should be reported with the open procedure code when a surgical arthroscopic procedure is converted to an open procedure.

4. CMS considers the shoulder to be a single anatomic structure. With three exceptions an NCCI procedure to procedure edit code pair consisting of two codes describing two shoulder arthroscopy procedures should never be bypassed with an NCCI-associated modifier when the two procedures are performed on the ipsilateral shoulder. This type of edit may be bypassed with an NCCI-associated modifier only if the two procedures are performed on contralateral shoulders. The three exceptions are described in Chapter 4, Section E (Arthroscopy), subsection 7.

5. With the exception of the knee *and shoulder*, arthroscopic debridement should not be reported separately with a surgical arthroscopy procedure when performed on the same joint at the same patient encounter. For knee arthroscopic debridement see the following *subsection*. *For shoulder arthroscopic debridement see the second subsection following this one.*

6. CPT codes 29874 (Surgical knee arthroscopy for removal of loose body or foreign body) and 29877 (Surgical knee arthroscopy for debridement/shaving of articular cartilage) should not be reported with other knee arthroscopy codes (29866-29889). With two exceptions HCPCS code G0289 (Surgical knee arthroscopy for removal of loose body, foreign body, debridement/shaving of articular cartilage at the time of other surgical knee arthroscopy in a different compartment of the same knee) may be reported with other knee arthroscopy codes. Since CPT codes 29880 and 29881 (Surgical knee arthroscopy with meniscectomy including debridement/shaving of articular cartilage of same or separate compartment(s)) include debridement/shaving of articular cartilage of any compartment, HCPCS code G0289 may be reported with CPT codes 29880 or 29881 only if reported for removal of a loose body or foreign body from a different compartment of the same knee. HCPCS code G0289 should not be reported for removal of a loose body or foreign body or debridement/shaving of articular cartilage from the same compartment as another knee arthroscopic procedure. *This paragraph was relocated here from Section H (General Policy Statements), paragraph 11 in 2014.*

7. Shoulder arthroscopy procedures include limited debridement (e.g., CPT code 29822) even if the limited debridement is performed in a different area of the same shoulder than the other procedure. With three exceptions, shoulder arthroscopy procedures include extensive debridement (e.g., CPT code 29823) even if the extensive debridement is performed in a different area of the same shoulder than the other procedure. CPT codes 29824 (arthroscopic claviculectomy including distal articular surface), 29827 (arthroscopic rotator cuff repair), and 29828 (biceps tenodesis) may be reported separately with CPT code 29823 if the extensive debridement is performed in a different area of the same shoulder.

8. Arthroscopic synovectomy of the knee may be reported with CPT codes 29875 (limited synovectomy, “separate procedure”) or 29876 (major synovectomy of two or three compartments). A synovectomy to “clean up” a joint on which another more extensive procedure is performed is not separately reportable. CPT code 29875 should never be reported with another arthroscopic knee procedure on the ipsilateral knee. CPT code 29876 may be reported for a medically reasonable and necessary synovectomy with another arthroscopic knee procedure on the ipsilateral knee if the synovectomy is performed in two compartments on which

another arthroscopic procedure is not performed. For example, CPT code 29876 should never be reported for a major synovectomy with CPT code 29880 (knee arthroscopy, medial AND lateral meniscectomy) on the ipsilateral knee since knee arthroscopic procedures other than synovectomy are performed in two of the three knee compartments.

F. ***Spine (Vertebral Column)***

1. Exploration of the surgical field is a standard surgical practice. Physicians should not report a HCPCS/CPT code describing exploration of a surgical field with another HCPCS/CPT code describing a procedure in that surgical field. For example, CPT code 22830 describes exploration of a spinal fusion. CPT code 22830 should not be reported with another procedure of the spine in the same anatomic area. However, if the spinal fusion exploration is performed in a different anatomic area than another spinal procedure, CPT code 22830 may be reported separately with modifier 59.

2. Some procedures (e.g., spine) frequently utilize intraoperative neurophysiology testing. Intraoperative neurophysiology testing (HCPCS/CPT codes 95940, 95941/G0453) should not be reported by the physician performing an operative procedure since it is included in the global package. However, when performed by a different physician during the procedure, it is separately reportable by the second physician. The physician performing an operative procedure should not bill other 9XXXX neurophysiology testing codes for intraoperative neurophysiology testing (e.g., CPT codes 92585, 95822, 95860, 95861, 95867, 95868, 95870, 95907-95913, 95925-95937) since they are also included in the global package.

3. Spinal arthrodesis, exploration, and instrumentation procedures (CPT codes 22532-22865) and other spinal procedures include manipulation of the spine as an integral component of the procedures. CPT code 22505 (manipulation of spine requiring anesthesia, any region) should not be reported separately.

4. Many spinal procedures are grouped into families of codes where there are separate primary procedure codes describing the procedure at a single vertebral level in the cervical, thoracic, or lumbar region of the spine. Within some families of codes there is an add-on code for reporting the same procedure at each additional level without specification of the spinal region for the add-on code. When multiple procedures from one of these

families of codes are performed at contiguous vertebral levels, a physician should report only one primary code within the family of codes for one level and should report additional contiguous levels utilizing the add-on code(s) in the family of codes. The reported primary code should be the one corresponding to the spinal region of the first procedure. If multiple procedures from one of these families of codes are performed at multiple vertebral levels that are not contiguous and in different regions of the spine, the physician may report one primary code for each non-contiguous region.

For example, the family of CPT codes 22532-22534 describes arthrodesis by lateral extracavitary technique. CPT code 22532 describes the procedure for a single thoracic vertebral segment. CPT code 22533 describes the procedure for a single lumbar vertebral segment. CPT code 22534 is an add-on code describing the procedure for each additional thoracic or lumbar vertebral segment. If a physician performs arthrodesis by lateral extracavitary technique on contiguous vertebral segments such as T12 and L1, only one primary procedure code, the one for the first procedure, may be reported. The procedure on the second vertebral body may be reported with CPT code 22534. If a physician performs the procedure at T10 and L4, the physician may report CPT codes 22532 and 22533.

CPT codes 22510-22512 represent a family of codes describing percutaneous vertebroplasty, and CPT codes 22513-22515 represent a family of codes describing percutaneous vertebral augmentation. Within each of these families of codes, the physician may report only one primary procedure code and the add-on procedure code for each additional level(s) whether the additional level(s) are contiguous or not.

5. Fluoroscopy reported as CPT codes 76000 or 76001 should not be reported with spinal procedures unless there is a specific *CPT Manual* instruction indicating that it is separately reportable. For some spinal procedures there are specific radiologic guidance codes to report in lieu of these fluoroscopy codes. For other spinal procedures, fluoroscopy is used in lieu of a more traditional intraoperative radiologic examination which is included in the operative procedure. For other spinal procedure codes, fluoroscopy is integral to the procedure.

6. A bone marrow aspiration (CPT code 38220) should not be reported separately with a spinal osteotomy, vertebral fracture repair, spinal arthrodesis, spinal fusion, laminectomy, spinal

decompression, or vertebral corpectomy CPT code if the bone marrow aspiration is obtained from the surgical field. However, if the bone marrow aspiration is obtained from an anatomic site other than vertebrae on which the orthopedic/neurosurgical procedure is performed, it may be reported separately with an NCCI-associated modifier.

7. CPT codes 38230 (bone marrow harvesting for transplantation; allogeneic) and 38232 (bone marrow harvesting for transplantation; autologous) should not be reported separately with a spinal osteotomy, vertebral fracture repair, spinal arthrodesis, spinal fusion, spinal laminectomy, spinal decompression, or vertebral corpectomy CPT code for procurement of bone marrow aspirate. CPT codes 38230 and 38232 are used to report the procurement of bone marrow for future bone marrow transplantation.

8. CMS payment policy does not allow separate payment for CPT codes 63042 (laminotomy...; lumbar) or 63047 (laminectomy...; lumbar) with CPT codes 22630 or 22633 (arthrodesis; lumbar) when performed at the same interspace. If the two procedures are performed at different interspaces, the two codes of an edit pair may be reported with modifier 59 appended to CPT code 63042 or 63047.

9. Only one anterior or posterior instrumentation CPT code (e.g., CPT codes 22840-22847) may be reported through a single skin incision.

G. Fractures, Dislocations, and Casting/Splinting/Strapping

1. The application of external immobilization devices (casts, splints, strapping) at the time of a procedure includes the subsequent removal of the device when performed by the same entity (e.g., physician, practice, group, employees, etc.). Providers should not report removal or repair CPT codes 29700-29750 for those services. These removal or repair CPT codes may only be reported if the initial application of the cast, splint, or strapping was performed by a different entity.

2. *Casting/splinting/strapping CPT codes should not be reported for application of a dressing after a therapeutic procedure.*

3. Casting/splinting/strapping should not be reported separately if a restorative treatment or procedure to stabilize or protect a fracture, injury, or dislocation and/or afford comfort to the patient is also performed. Several examples follow: (1) If a provider injects an anesthetic agent into a peripheral nerve or branch (CPT code 64450), the provider should not report CPT codes such as 29515, 29540, or 29580 for that anatomic area; (2) A provider should not report a casting/splinting/strapping CPT code for the same site as an injection or aspiration (e.g., CPT codes 20526-20615); (3) Debridement CPT codes (e.g., 11042-11047, 97597) and grafting CPT codes (e.g., 15040-15776) should not be reported with a casting/splinting/strapping CPT code (e.g., 29445, 29580, 29581) for the same anatomic area. *This subsection was moved from Section G (Fractures, Dislocations, and Casting/Splinting/Strapping), subsection #2.*

4. Debridement including removal of foreign material at the site of an open fracture or open dislocation may be reported with CPT codes 11010-11012. Since these codes would be reported with a CPT code for treatment of the open fracture or dislocation, a casting/splinting/strapping code should not be reported separately.

5. If an ankle fracture or dislocation repair is stabilized with a strapping, the ankle fracture or dislocation repair CPT code should not be reported with a strapping code such as CPT code 29581 (application of multi-layer venous wound compression system, below knee) even if the strapping simultaneously treats another problem such as edema or a venous stasis ulcer. Fracture and dislocation CPT codes include the initial casting, strapping, or splinting.

6. CPT codes for closed, percutaneous, or open treatment of fractures or dislocations include the application of casts, splints, or strapping. CPT codes for casting/splinting/strapping should not be reported separately.

7. If a physician treats a fracture, dislocation, or injury with an initial cast, strap, or splint and also assumes the follow-up care, the physician cannot report the casting/splinting/strapping CPT codes since these services are included in the fracture and/or dislocation CPT codes.

8. If a physician treats a fracture, dislocation, or injury with a cast, splint, or strap as an initial service without any other definitive procedure or treatment and only expects to perform the initial care, the physician may report an evaluation and management (E&M) service, a casting/splinting/strapping CPT code, and a cast/splint/strap supply code (Q4001-Q4051).

For OPPS if a hospital treats a fracture, dislocation, or injury with a cast, splint, or strap as an initial service without any other definitive procedure or treatment, the hospital should report the appropriate casting/splinting/strapping CPT code. Payment for the cast/splint/strap supplies is included in the payment for the procedure reported.

9. An evaluation and management (E&M) service*, including emergency department E&M,* may be reported with a casting/splinting/strapping CPT code if *and only if* the E&M service is significant and separately identifiable. *Casting/splinting/strapping CPT codes are minor surgical procedures with a "000" global day period. Global surgery rules for minor surgical procedures do not allow a physician to report an E&M service related to deciding whether to perform a minor surgical procedure.*

10. There are CPT codes (20670 and 20680) for removal of internal fixation devices (e.g., pin, rod). These codes are not separately reportable if the removal is performed as a necessary integral component of another procedure. For example, if revision of an open fracture repair for nonunion or malunion of bone requires removal of a previously inserted pin, CPT code 20670 or 20680 is not separately reportable.

Similarly, if a superficial or deep implant (e.g., buried wire, pin, rod) requires surgical removal (CPT codes 20670 and 20680), it is not separately reportable if it is performed as an integral part of another procedure.

11. CPT code 20670 or 20680 (removal of implant) should not be reported for the removal of wire sutures during cardiac reoperation procedures or sternal procedures (e.g., debridement, resection, closure of median sternotomy separation).

12. If a closed reduction procedure fails and is converted to an open reduction procedure at the same patient encounter, only the more extensive open reduction procedure is reportable.

Similarly, if a closed fracture treatment procedure fails and is converted to an open fracture treatment procedure at the same patient encounter, only the more extensive open fracture treatment procedure is reportable.

13. If interdental wiring (e.g., CPT code 21497) is necessary for the treatment of a facial or other fracture, arthroplasty, facial reconstructive surgery, or other facial/head procedure, the interdental wiring is not separately reportable. However, if interdental wiring is performed unrelated to another facial/head procedure, the interdental wiring may be separately reportable with modifier 59.

14. When it is necessary to perform skeletal/joint manipulation under anesthesia to assess range of motion, reduce a fracture or for any other purpose during another procedure in an anatomically related area, the corresponding manipulation code (e.g., CPT codes 22505, 23700, 27275, 27570, 27860) is not separately reportable.

15. When a fracture or dislocation is repaired, only one fracture/dislocation repair code may be reported. Closed repair codes, percutaneous repair codes, and open repair codes for the same anatomic site are mutually exclusive of one another, and only one of these codes may be reported for the repair of a fracture or dislocation at an anatomic site.

16. If a single cast, strapping, or splint treats multiple closed fractures without manipulation, only one closed fracture treatment without manipulation CPT code may be reported.

Additionally, if a single cast, strapping, or splint treats multiple fractures without manipulation in addition to one or more fracture(s) with manipulation, a closed fracture without manipulation CPT code should not be reported separately.

These policies also apply to the closed treatment of multiple fractures not requiring application of a cast, strapping, or splint. Thus if multiple closed fractures occur in an area that would have been treated with a single cast, strapping, or splint, only one CPT code for closed fracture treatment without manipulation may be reported.

If a cast, strapping, or splint applied after an open or percutaneous treatment of a fracture also treats a closed

fracture without manipulation, a closed fracture without manipulation CPT code should not be reported separately.

These principles also apply to the treatment of multiple dislocations or combinations of multiple closed fractures and dislocations. If multiple dislocations and/or fractures are treated without manipulation and stabilized with a single cast, strapping, or splint, only one CPT code for closed dislocation or fracture treatment (without manipulation) may be reported. Additionally, if a single cast, strapping, or splint treats any combination of closed dislocations and/or closed fractures without manipulation in addition to at least one closed dislocation or fracture that did require manipulation, only a single CPT code for closed treatment with manipulation of the dislocation or fracture may be reported.

Similarly, if multiple dislocations and/or fractures are treated with or without manipulation and do not require a cast, strapping, or splint, only one CPT code for closed dislocation or fracture treatment CPT code may be reported for the anatomic area that would have been treated by a single cast, strap or splint.

Finally, if a cast, strapping, or splint applied after an open or percutaneous treatment of a dislocation and/or fracture also treats a closed dislocation and/or fracture that did not require manipulation, a CPT code for closed dislocation or fracture treatment (without manipulation) should not be reported separately.

17. Application of a multi-layer compression system (CPT codes 29581-29584) includes manual therapy in the anatomic region of the multi-layer compression system. CPT code 97140 (manual therapy techniques...) should not be reported for any type of manual therapy at the same patient encounter in the anatomic region where a multi-layer compression system is applied.

18. CPT code 20650 (“insertion of wire or pin with application of skeletal traction, including removal (separate procedure)”) should not be reported for insertion of wires or pins without application of skeletal traction. Since the code descriptor includes the “separate procedure” designation, this code should not be reported for application of skeletal traction with a fracture treatment or other repair code for the same anatomic region.

H. Medically Unlikely Edits (MUEs)

1. MUEs are described in Chapter I, Section V.

2. Providers/suppliers should be cautious about reporting services on multiple lines of a claim utilizing modifiers to bypass MUEs. MUEs were set so that such occurrences should be uncommon. If a provider/supplier does this frequently for any HCPCS/CPT code, the provider/supplier may be coding units of service incorrectly. The provider/supplier should consider contacting his/her national healthcare organization or the national medical/surgical society whose members commonly perform the procedure to clarify the correct reporting of units of service. A national healthcare organization, provider/supplier, or other interested third party may request a reconsideration of the MUE value of a HCPCS/CPT code by CMS by writing the MUE contractor, Correct Coding Solutions, LLC, at the address indicated in Chapter I, Section V.

3. The code descriptors for CPT codes 20670 (removal of implant; superficial...) and 20680 (removal of implant; deep...) do not define the unit of service. CMS allows one unit of service for all implants removed from an anatomic site. This single unit of service includes the removal of all screws, rods, plates, wires, etc. from an anatomic site whether through one or more surgical incisions. An additional unit of service may be reported only if implant(s) are removed from a distinct and separate anatomic site.

4. The MUE values for CPT codes 20931 (allograft, structural, for spine surgery only...), 20937 (autograft for spine surgery only...; morselized...), and 20938 (autograft for spine surgery only...: structural...) are one (1). Each of these codes may be reported with only one unit of service per operative procedure regardless of the number of vertebral levels fused.

5. Procedures performed on fingers should be reported with modifiers FA, F1-F9, and procedures performed on toes should be reported with modifiers TA, T1-T9. The MUE values for many finger and toe procedures are one (1) based on use of these modifiers for clinical scenarios in which the same procedure is performed on more than one finger or toe.

6. The CMS *Internet-Only Manual* (Publication 100-04 *Medicare Claims Processing Manual*, Chapter 12 (Physicians/Nonphysician Practitioners), Section 40.7.B. and

Chapter 4 (Part B Hospital (Including Inpatient Hospital Part B and OPPS)), Section 20.6.2 requires that practitioners and outpatient hospitals report bilateral surgical procedures with modifier 50 and one (1) UOS on a single claim line. MUE values for surgical procedures that may be performed bilaterally are based on this reporting requirement. Since this reporting requirement does not apply to an ambulatory surgical center (ASC), an ASC should report a bilateral surgical procedure on two claim lines, each with one (1) UOS using modifiers LT and RT on different claim lines. This reporting requirement does not apply to non-surgical diagnostic procedures.

7. CPT codes 20600-20611 are a family of codes describing arthrocentesis for aspiration and/or injection of different sized joints or bursae with or without ultrasound guidance. The unit of service (UOS) for each of these codes is a joint and its surrounding bursae, if any. A physician should not report more than one (1) UOS for arthrocentesis of any one joint regardless of whether or not the physician also aspirates or injects one or more of its surrounding bursae. For example, if a physician performs arthrocentesis of the shoulder and two bursae of the same shoulder without ultrasound guidance, only 1 UOS of CPT code 20610 may be reported.

8. CPT codes 21248 and 21249 respectively describe partial or complete reconstruction of the mandible or maxilla with endosteal implant. The unit of service for each of these codes is the reconstruction, not the endosteal implant.

9. A physician may only report one (1) unit of service of a CPT code describing closed treatment without manipulation of fracture if the same treatment (e.g., cast, splint, strapping) treats fractures of multiple similar bones. For example, if a cast is applied without manipulation to treat fractures of multiple metatarsals of the same foot, only one unit of service of CPT code 28470 may be reported for that treatment. If no cast, splint, or strapping is utilized for closed treatment without manipulation of multiple similar bones, only one (1) unit of service may be reported for the applicable code.

10. Closed treatment without manipulation of more than one metacarpal bone of the same hand should be reported with a single unit of service (UOS) of CPT code 26600 (Closed treatment of metacarpal fracture, single; without manipulation, each bone) regardless of the number of metacarpal bones treated in that one hand. No more than one UOS of CPT code 26600 per hand may be

reported regardless of the number of fractured metacarpal bones in that hand. The same principle applies to closed treatment without manipulation of fractures of multiple carpal, tarsal or metatarsal bones in one extremity.

I. General Policy Statements

1. MUE and NCCI PTP edits are based on services provided by the same physician to the same beneficiary on the same date of service. Physicians should not inconvenience beneficiaries nor increase risks to beneficiaries by performing services on different dates of service to avoid MUE or NCCI PTP edits.

2. In this Manual many policies are described utilizing the term “physician”. Unless indicated differently the usage of this term does not restrict the policies to physicians only but applies to all practitioners, hospitals, providers, or suppliers eligible to bill the relevant HCPCS/CPT codes pursuant to applicable portions of the Social Security Act (SSA) of 1965, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and Medicare rules. In some sections of this Manual, the term “physician” would not include some of these entities because specific rules do not apply to them. For example, Anesthesia Rules [e.g., CMS *Internet-Only Manual*, Publication 100-04 (*Medicare Claims Processing Manual*), Chapter 12 (Physician/Nonphysician Practitioners), Section 50(Payment for Anesthesiology Services)] and Global Surgery Rules [e.g., CMS *Internet-Only Manual*, Publication 100-04 (*Medicare Claims Processing Manual*), Chapter 12 (Physician/Nonphysician Practitioners), Section 40 (Surgeons and Global Surgery)] do not apply to hospitals.

3. Providers reporting services under Medicare’s hospital outpatient prospective payment system (OPPS) should report all services in accordance with appropriate Medicare *Internet-Only Manual* (*IOM*) instructions.

4. In 2010 the *CPT Manual* modified the numbering of codes so that the sequence of codes as they appear in the *CPT Manual* does not necessarily correspond to a sequential numbering of codes. In the *National Correct Coding Initiative Policy Manual for Medicare Services*, use of a numerical range of codes reflects all codes that numerically fall within the range regardless of their sequential order in the *CPT Manual.*

5. With few exceptions the payment for a surgical procedure includes payment for dressings, supplies, and local anesthesia. These items are not separately reportable under their own HCPCS/CPT codes. Wound closures utilizing adhesive strips or tape alone are not separately reportable. In the absence of an operative procedure, these types of wound closures are included in an E&M service. Under limited circumstances wound closure utilizing tissue adhesive may be reported separately. If a practitioner utilizes a tissue adhesive alone for a wound closure, it may be reported separately with HCPCS code G0168 (wound closure utilizing tissue adhesive(s) only). If a practitioner utilizes tissue adhesive in addition to staples or sutures to close a wound, HCPCS code G0168 is not separately reportable but is included in the tissue repair. Under OPPS HCPCS code G0168 is not recognized and paid. Facilities may report wound closure utilizing sutures, staples, or tissue adhesives, either singly or in combination with each other, with the appropriate CPT code in the "Repair (Closure)" section of the *CPT Manual*.

6. If a tissue transfer procedure such as a graft (e.g., CPT codes 20900-20926) is included in the code descriptor of a primary procedure, the tissue transfer procedure is not separately reportable.

7. CPT code 20926 describes a graft of "other" tissues such as paratenon, fat, or dermis. Similar to other graft codes, this code may not be reported with another code where the code descriptor includes procurement of the graft. Additionally, CPT code 20926 may be reported only if another graft HCPCS/CPT code does not more precisely describe the nature of the graft.

8. Some procedures routinely utilize monitoring of interstitial fluid pressure during the postoperative period (e.g., distal lower extremity procedures with risk of anterior compartment compression). CPT code 20950 (monitoring of interstitial fluid pressure) should not be reported separately for this monitoring.

9. If electrical stimulation is used to aid bone healing, bone stimulation codes (CPT codes 20974-20975) may be reported. CPT codes 64550-64595 describe procedures for neurostimulators which are utilized to control pain and should not be reported for electrical stimulation to aid bone healing. Similarly the physical medicine electrical stimulation codes (CPT codes 97014

and 97032) should not be reported for electrical stimulation to aid bone healing.

10. Exploration of the surgical field is a standard surgical practice. Physicians should not report a HCPCS/CPT code describing exploration of a surgical field with another HCPCS/CPT code describing a procedure in that surgical field. For example, CPT code 22830 describes exploration of a spinal fusion. CPT code 22830 should not be reported with another procedure of the spine in the same anatomic area. However, if the spinal fusion exploration is performed in a different anatomic area than another spinal procedure, CPT code 22830 may be reported separately with modifier 59.

11. Debridement of tissue in the surgical field of another musculoskeletal procedure is not separately reportable. For example, debridement of muscle and/or bone (CPT codes 11043-11044, 11046-11047) associated with excision of a tumor of bone is not separately reportable. Similarly, debridement of tissue (e.g., CPT codes 11042, 11045, 11720-11721, 97597, 97598) superficial to, but in the surgical field, of a musculoskeletal procedure is not separately reportable. However, debridement of tissue at the site of an open fracture or dislocation may be reported separately with CPT codes 11010-11012.

12. This paragraph was moved to Section E (Arthroscopy), paragraph 6.

13. The NCCI has an edit with column one CPT code of 24305 (tendon lengthening, upper arm and elbow, each tendon) and column two CPT code of 64718 (neuroplasty and/or transposition; ulnar nerve at elbow). When performing the tendon lengthening described by CPT code 24305, a neuroplasty of the ulnar nerve is not separately reportable, but a transposition of the ulnar nerve at the elbow is separately reportable. If a provider performs the tendon lengthening described by CPT code 24305 and performs an ulnar nerve transposition at the elbow, the NCCI PTP edit may be bypassed by reporting CPT code 64718 appending modifier 59.

14. Some procedures (e.g., spine) frequently utilize intraoperative neurophysiology testing. Intraoperative neurophysiology testing (HCPCS/CPT codes 95940, 95941/G0453) should not be reported by the physician performing an operative procedure since it is included in the global package. However, when performed by a different physician during the procedure, it

is separately reportable by the second physician. The physician performing an operative procedure should not bill other 9XXXX neurophysiology testing codes for intraoperative neurophysiology testing (e.g., CPT codes 92585, 95822, 95860, 95861, 95867, 95868, 95870, 95907-95913, 95925-95937) since they are also included in the global package.

15. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #3.*

16. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #4.*

17. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #5.*

18. CPT codes 28288, 28306, 28307, 28310, and 28315 should not be reported with bunionectomy CPT codes *28291*-28299 for procedures performed on the ipsilateral first toe or metatarsal. CPT codes 28306, 28307, and 28310 (osteotomy procedures) should not be reported with a bunionectomy code because there are bunionectomy codes that include osteotomy of the first metatarsal or proximal phalanx of the first toe. CPT code 28288 (ostectomy ...) should not be reported with a bunionectomy code because it is a misuse of this code to report ostectomy of the median eminence of the metatarsal bone which is integral to the bunionectomy procedure. Additionally, some bunionectomy procedures include excision of the head of the first metatarsal. CPT code 28315 (sesamoidectomy, first toe (separate procedure)) includes the “separate procedure” designation in its code descriptor. CMS payment policy does not allow separate payment for a procedure designated as a “separate procedure” when performed along with another procedure in the same anatomic area.

19. CPT codes 28008, 28060, 28062, 28250 and 29893 describe procedures that may be performed on plantar fascia. No two codes from this group should be reported for treatment of plantar fascia of the ipsilateral foot at the same patient encounter.

20. Fluoroscopy (CPT codes 76000 and 76001) is an integral component of arthroscopic procedures when performed. CPT codes 76000 and/or 76001 should not be reported separately with an arthroscopic procedure.

21. Arthrocentesis procedures (e.g., CPT codes 20600-20611) should not be reported separately with an open or

arthroscopic joint procedure when performed on the same joint. However, if an arthrocentesis procedure is performed on one joint and an open or arthroscopic procedure is performed on a different joint, the arthrocentesis procedure may be reported separately.

22. CPT codes 24361 (arthroplasty, elbow; with distal humeral prosthetic replacement) and 24363 (arthroplasty, elbow; with distal humerus and proximal ulnar prosthetic replacement (eg, total elbow)) include removal of native joint or a failed prosthesis and replacement with a new prosthesis. CPT code 24160 (removal of prosthesis,...humeral and ulnar components) should not be reported separately with CPT codes 24361 or 24363 for removal of a prior failed prosthetic joint.

CPT codes 23470 (arthroplasty, glenohumeral joint; hemiarthroplasty) and 23472 (arthroplasty, glenohumeral joint; total shoulder (glenoid and proximal humeral replacement (eg, total shoulder))) include removal of native joint or a failed prosthesis and replacement with a new prosthesis. CPT codes 23333(removal of foreign body, shoulder; deep (subfascial or intramuscular)), 23334 (removal of prosthesis, includes debridement and synovectomy when performed; humeral or glenoid component), or 23335 (removal of prosthesis, includes debridement and synovectomy when performed; humeral and glenoid components (eg, total shoulder)) should not be reported separately with CPT codes 23470 or 23472 for removal of a prior failed prosthetic joint.

23. CMS considers the shoulder to be a single anatomic structure. An NCCI procedure to procedure edit code pair consisting of two codes describing two shoulder procedures should never be bypassed with an NCCI-associated modifier when performed on the ipsilateral shoulder. This type of edit may be bypassed only if the two procedures are performed on contralateral shoulders.

24. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #6.*

25. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #7.*

26. *This subsection was moved to Section F (Spine (Vertebral Column)), subsection #8.*

27. Under Medicare Global Surgery Rules, drug administration services (CPT codes 96360-*96377*) are not separately reportable by the physician performing a procedure for drug administration services related to the procedure.

Under the OPPS drug administration services related to operative procedures are included in the associated procedural HCPCS/CPT codes. Examples of such drug administration services include, but are not limited to, anesthesia (local or other), hydration, and medications such as anxiolytics or antibiotics. Providers should not report CPT codes 96360-*96377* for these services.

Medicare Global Surgery Rules prevent separate payment for postoperative pain management when provided by the physician performing an operative procedure. CPT codes 36000, 36410, *62320-62327*, 64400-64489, and 96360-*96377* describe some services that may be utilized for postoperative pain management. The services described by these codes may be reported by the physician performing the operative procedure only if provided for purposes unrelated to the postoperative pain management, the operative procedure, or anesthesia for the procedure.

If a physician performing an operative procedure provides a drug administration service (CPT codes 96360-96375) for a purpose unrelated to anesthesia, intra-operative care, or post-procedure pain management, the drug administration service (CPT codes 96360-96375) may be reported with an NCCI-associated modifier if performed in a non-facility site of service.

28. *With limited exceptions open or arthroscopic procedures performed on a joint include debridement (open or arthroscopic) if performed. A debridement code may be reported with a joint procedure code only if the debridement is performed on a different joint or at a site unrelated to the joint. See Section E (Arthroscopy) for discussion of exceptions.*

29. The Medicare global surgery package includes insertion of urinary catheters. CPT codes 51701-51703 (insertion of bladder catheters) should not be reported with any procedure with a global period of 000, 010, or 090 days nor with some procedures with a global period of MMM.

30. Closure/repair of a surgical incision is included in the global surgical package. Wound repair CPT codes 12001-13153 should not be reported separately to describe closure of surgical incisions for procedures with global surgery indicators of 000,

010, 090, or MMM.

31. Control of bleeding during an operative procedure is an integral component of a surgical procedure and is not separately reportable. Postoperative control of bleeding not requiring return to the operating room is included in the global surgical package and is not separately reportable. However, control of bleeding requiring return to the operating room in the postoperative period is separately reportable utilizing modifier 78.

32. Fine needle aspiration (FNA) (CPT codes 10021, 10022) should not be reported with another biopsy procedure code for the same lesion unless one specimen is inadequate for diagnosis. For example, an FNA specimen is usually examined for adequacy when the specimen is aspirated. If the specimen is adequate for diagnosis, it is not necessary to obtain an additional biopsy specimen. However, if the specimen is not adequate and another type of biopsy (e.g., needle, open) is subsequently performed at the same patient encounter, the other biopsy procedure code may also be reported with an NCCI-associated modifier.

33. If the code descriptor of a HCPCS/CPT code includes the phrase, “separate procedure”, the procedure is subject to NCCI PTP edits based on this designation. CMS does not allow separate reporting of a procedure designated as a “separate procedure” when it is performed at the same patient encounter as another procedure in an anatomically related area through the same skin incision, orifice, or surgical approach.

34. Most NCCI PTP edits for codes describing procedures that may be performed on bilateral organs or structures (e.g., arms, eyes, kidneys, lungs) allow use of NCCI-associated modifiers (modifier indicator of “1”) because the two codes of the code pair edit may be reported if the two procedures are performed on contralateral organs or structures. Most of these code pairs should not be reported with NCCI-associated modifiers when the corresponding procedures are performed on the ipsilateral organ or structure unless there is a specific coding rationale to bypass the edit. The existence of the NCCI PTP edit indicates that the two codes generally should not be reported together unless the two corresponding procedures are performed at two separate patient encounters or two separate anatomic sites. However, if the corresponding procedures are performed at the same patient encounter and in contiguous structures, NCCI-associated modifiers should generally not be utilized.

35. If fluoroscopy is performed during an endoscopic procedure, it is integral to the procedure. This principle applies to all endoscopic procedures including, but not limited to, laparoscopy, hysteroscopy, thoracoscopy, arthroscopy, esophagoscopy, colonoscopy, other GI endoscopy, laryngoscopy, bronchoscopy, and cystourethroscopy.

36. If the code descriptor for a HCPCS/CPT code, CPT Manual instruction for a code, or CMS instruction for a code indicates that the procedure includes radiologic guidance, a physician should not separately report a HCPCS/CPT code for radiologic guidance including, but not limited to, fluoroscopy, ultrasound, computed tomography, or magnetic resonance imaging codes. If the physician performs an additional procedure on the same date of service for which a radiologic guidance or imaging code may be separately reported, the radiologic guidance or imaging code appropriate for that additional procedure may be reported separately with an NCCI-associated modifier if appropriate.