Billing for Pre-Op H&P Visit

June 8, 2017

Question:
Hospitals require that we do an H&P within 30 days of taking a patient to the OR. If this visit is more than 48 hours prior to surgery, is that a billable visit?

Answer:
No, the H&P in this case is not a billable visit. This question comes up often and was addressed by AMA CPT Assistant in the following excerpt:

“If the decision for surgery occurs the day of or before the major procedure and includes the preoperative evaluation and management (E/M) services, then this visit is separately reportable. Modifier 57, Decision for Surgery, is appended to the E/M code to indicate this is the decision-making service, not the history and physical (H&P) alone. If the surgeon sees the patient and makes a decision for surgery and then the patient returns for a visit where the intent of the visit is the preoperative H&P, and this service occurs in the interval between the decision-making visit and the day of surgery, regardless of when the visit occurs (1 day, 3 days or 2 weeks) the visit is not separately billable as it is included in the surgical package. Example: The surgeon sees the patient on March 1 and makes a decision for surgery. Surgery is scheduled for April 1. The patient returns to the office on March 27 for the H&P, consent signing, and to ask and clarify additional questions. The visit on March 27 is not billable, as it is the preoperative H&P visit and is included in the surgical package.”

Source: AMA CPT Assistant, May 2008/Volume 19, Issue 5, pp. 9, 11
CPT says once the decision is made to proceed with surgery the subsequent visits related to the procedure (e.g., doing H&P, getting consent form signed, answering questions) are included. However, in some cases a patient may be a candidate for a surgical procedure but has a number of medical issues (such as cardiac disease and asthma) that require a medical evaluation to determine if he/she is healthy enough for surgery. After the patient has had a “medical clearance” he/she returns to you to review the medical doctor’s evaluation and you at that point decide to proceed with surgery. This visit can be billed as an E&M visit as the decision for surgery is just now being made.

*This response is based on the best information available as of 06/08/17.*