

Right and Left Colectomies

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Submit coding and billing questions to: dcr4codingcorner@gmail.com

QUESTION

I recently took care of a patient who had synchronous cecal adenocarcinoma and distal sigmoid adenocarcinoma for which I performed a robotic ascending colectomy with ileocolonic anastomosis (Current Procedural Terminology [CPT] 44205) and anterior resection with coloproctostomy (CPT 44207). This was denied by my billing department, as it was stated that these procedures were bundled despite the multiple additional hours it took to remove both cancers during 1 operation. Has anyone else encountered this and is there another way to get credit for all the added hours of work? A plumber bills for both fixing my toilet and sink. Why can't I get reimbursed for basically 2 separate procedures?

ANSWER

- In this case, the consensus is to bill CPT 44207 for lap colectomy with colo-proctoscopy (31 relative value units [RVUs]) as this exceeds the value of the laparoscopic right colectomy CPT 44205 (22 RVUs). CPT codes 44205 and 44207 are “bundled,” that is, only 1 code can be used.
- Also, add the 22 modifier.
- The 22 modifier often goes unreimbursed, and the coder/biller would likely need to appeal the decision based on the separate segment of the right colon with a second anastomosis being performed.
- As always, the 22 modifier requires additional documentation and is better reported as an addendum to the main operative report, which should explain in great detail the specifics of extended time, second anastomosis in a different segment of the colon, different instrumentation, and anything else relevant to the procedure.

- The plumber bills on time, which could be good or bad depending on honesty.

DISCLAIMER

Your question was answered to the best of our ability using currently available legitimate resources. These include, but are not limited to, CPT codes, International Classification of Diseases – Tenth Edition (ICD-10), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System, and Diagnosis Related Groups, as well as common hospital billing practices. CPT codes and descriptions are © CPT 2024. Professional Edition American Medical Association (AMA). All rights reserved. CPT and CodeManager are registered trademarks of the AMA RVU Update Committee.

COMMON RESOURCES

- CPT 2023 Professional Edition. Pages 366–370.
- AMA RVU Update Committee Database 2024, version 1.2.
- CMS National Correct Coding Initiative Edits: <https://www.cms.gov/national-correct-coding-initiative-ncci>.
- AMA CPT: <https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/cpt>.
- CMS Physician Fee Schedule: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/payment/fee-schedules/physician>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ICD-10: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/icd/icd-10-cm/index.html>.
- American College of Surgeons Frequently Asked Questions About CPT Coding: <https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2024/november-december-2024-volume-109-issue-10/frequently-asked-questions-about-cpt-coding/>.