

How to Code High-Resolution Anoscopies?

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On behalf of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons Healthcare Economics Committee

QUESTION

I would appreciate insight into coding high-resolution anoscopies (HRAs) with biopsy, fulguration, and sometimes closure of a defect by suture. Codes at my institution have been 46601 and 46607. At the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons meeting in 2024, there was an implication that HRA with fulguration should be 45190. Our billing department calls to question the fulguration, as a “tumor” is not usually noted. Also, 45171 seems to apply where the abnormal tissue is excised and the defect is closed with suture.

ANSWER

The consensus from the coding corner group is that for HRA with biopsy, the CPT code should be 46607, and with HRA biopsy and simultaneous fulguration, the CPT code 46924 should be added.

CPT codes 45190 and 45171 are specifically for rectal tumors that are excised or fulgurated. HRAs with biopsy and/or fulguration are usually performed for nonvisual or nonpalpable lesions of the anal canal, not the rectum, which are evaluated by HRAs with the diagnostic history of anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN) or a positive anal Papanicolaou test.

CPT code 46922 is used for the destruction of simple anal lesions without HRA, and CPT code 46924 is used for the destruction of more extensive anal lesions. Larger anal canal “tumors” are usually only biopsied to await the pathology report and further evaluation by MRI or PET and subsequent treatment with radiation and chemotherapy or major surgery. Effective local excision of an anal “tumor” is not usually possible for curative excision without creating bowel control problems.

DISCLAIMER

Your question was answered to the best of our ability using currently available legitimate resources. These include but are not limited to Current Procedural Technology (CPT) codes, International Classification of Diseases–10th 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.

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COMMON RESOURCES

- CPT 2023 Professional Edition, pages 366–370.
- AMA Relative Value Unit Update Committee (RUC): <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/rvs-update-committee-ruc/rvs-update-committee-ruc>.
- AMA RUC 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 (PFS): <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/payment/fee-schedules/physician>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 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/>.

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

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