

NEW PATIENT VS. ESTABLISHED PATIENT SELECTION ASSISTANCE

Definitions

- **New Patient** - A new patient is defined as one who has not received any professional services from a physician or physician group practice (same physician specialty) within the previous 3 years, e.g., evaluation and management (E/M) services, surgical procedures or other face-to-face services.
 - An interpretation of a diagnostic test, reading an x-ray or EKG, etc., in the absence of an E/M service or other face-to-face service with a patient does not affect the designation as a new patient.
 - Physicians in the same group practice of the same specialty are to bill and be paid as though they were a single physician.
 - Physicians who are of a different specialty may bill and be paid without regard to their membership in a group.
- **Established Patient** - An established patient is one who has received professional services from a physician or a physician in the same group practice of the same specialty within the previous 3 years.
 - If a physician is on call or covering for another physician, a patient's encounter will be handled the same as if the unavailable physician were there.

Additional Information

- No distinction is made between new and established patients in the emergency department.
- Physicians who share the same tax ID are part of the same group even if they are in different locations.

Common Scenario	Established Patient	New Patient
A physician leaves a practice to join a new one. A patient follows the physician to the new practice.	Patient sees original physician at new practice. The patient is considered an established patient for all physicians of the same specialty at the practice.	Patient sees another physician in the new practice <u>before</u> seeing their original physician. For this physician, they are a new patient.
The professional component of a previous procedure is billed within a 3-year time period, e.g., a lab interpretation is billed and no E/M service or other face-to-face service is billed.		This patient remains a new patient for the initial E/M visit.
A physician and nurse practitioner (NP) are in the same office. The physician sees a patient; the NP later sees the same patient.		NP can perform and bill for a new patient visit as long as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the NP performed and documented the service • the service meets the criteria for a new patient visit • the NP bills under his/her own NPI
A family physician sees a new patient and refers to a surgeon in the same group with the same tax ID.		If the surgeon has not seen the patient in the past 3 years, he/she is considered a new patient since the two physicians are of different specialties.
A patient presents with a new problem within 3 years for a visit.	This is an established patient; a previous or new problem has no bearing on this. If it has been under 3 years since professional services were rendered, it is an established patient.	If it has been 3 years or more, it is a new patient.

Applicable References: CPT-4 (current) coding book ©AMA; Wisconsin Physician Services (WPS), www.wpsmedicare.com; Internet only manual 100-04, chapter 12, section 30.6.7, www.cms.gov/manual.

QUESTIONS?

Contact ISMA Practice Management staff at (800) 257-4762 or (317) 261-2060.

This information is current and accurate as of 9/15/2014. Please check the references for regular updates.