Take the Chart Coding Challenge: E&M or Eye Visit Code? What Level?

It is the challenge that ophthalmologists and their staff face each day: Should the exam be submitted using an Evaluation and Management (E&M) code or an Eye visit code? And what level of exam does the documentation support? Test your knowledge with two scenarios.

**Exam 1: Commercial Payer With a Vision Plan**
A new patient presented with complaints of blurry vision in both eyes. The 43-year-old man said that this came on gradually over the previous three days, and it was affecting both distance and near vision.

- **Review of systems.** Ten body systems reviewed. All normal.
- **Past history.** Not taking any medications. Has worn glasses since he was 7 years old. No family history issues. Drinks socially.
- **Vision exam.** A refraction showed that there was a small change from the prescription of the glasses that he was wearing. All 12 elements of the exam were performed through dilated pupils. IOP was 35 mm Hg in both eyes. Gonioscopy revealed that his angles were open. Cup-to-disc ratio was 0.7 in both eyes. An order was placed for visual field 30-2 plus optic nerve photos in both eyes within the week.

**Diagnosis.** Primary open-angle glaucoma in both eyes, indeterminate stage.

**Dissecting Exam 1**
Breaking the exam down as shown below can help you to determine which code you should submit.

- **Medical decision-making.** The medical decision-making had a moderate level of complexity.
- **Type of history.** The HPI, ROS, and PFSH would support a history component that is considered comprehensive.
- **Type of exam.** If you submit an Eye visit code, it would be considered a comprehensive exam. If you submit an E&M code, you would only be able to report a detailed exam because you didn’t document an assessment of mental status (orientation to time, place, and person, and/or the patient’s mood and affect).

**Exam 2: An established patient complained of morning crusting on her eyelids and a burning sensation.**

**FURTHER READING.** Visit aao.org/eyenet/archive and read “E&M Codes Versus Eye Visit Codes: Here’s What’s New for 2019” (April, Savvy Coder) and “Nine Scenarios When You Should Not Use an Eye Visit Code” (September, Savvy Coder).

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