

Intro to Dermatology Billing

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Agenda

- **What is a Dermatologist?**
- **Benign vs Cancer**
- **Dermatology Procedures**
 - Destruction
 - Biopsy
 - Excision
 - Mohs
- **Mohs Surgery**
 - Procedure description
 - Closure Types
- **Cosmetic Services**

Resources

- American Academy of Dermatology Association
- American Cancer Society
- American Medical Association

What is a Dermatologist?

- A dermatologist is a doctor who specializes in conditions involving the skin, hair, and nails. A dermatologist can identify and treat more than 3,000 conditions. These conditions include eczema, psoriasis, and skin cancer, among many others.
- A dermatologist treats patient of all ages.
- Dermatology providers can include doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

Benign vs Cancerous

- Benign refers to a condition that is non-cancerous or not malignant
 - Benign is considered not to be a threat to someone's health
- Certain benign conditions can become cancerous
 - Should be monitored closely
 - Can require surgery to remove
 - What may look harmless to us could be a sign of an underlying disease
- Examples of benign lesion
 - Warts
 - Freckles
 - Seborrheic Keratosis

- Cancerous

- Another term for Cancerous is Cancer or Malignant
- Cancer is caused by uncontrolled division of abnormal cells
- Cancer does need to be treated
- People who have a history of skin cancer should be monitored by a dermatologist

- Types of Skin Cancer

- Basal Cell Carcinoma
- Squamous Cell Carcinoma
- Melanoma
- Merkel Cell Carcinoma

- Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)

- Most common type of skin cancer
- Most often develops on areas of sun-exposed skin such as the face, however it can be found in other areas of the body as well
- Treatments include prescription creams or surgery to have spot removed



- Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)
 - Second most common type of skin cancer
 - Can be aggressive
 - Can spread to other parts of the body if left untreated
 - Treatments include Cryosurgery, Curettage and Electrodesiccation, or Mohs Surgery
 - Treatment varies depending size and location



- Melanoma

- Due to its tendency to spread, melanoma is often considered the most serious form of skin cancer
 - Treatment usually involves surgery



- Merkel Cell Carcinoma

- This is a rare type of cancer but is more deadly than melanoma
- Most often seen with the elderly or people with weak immune systems
- Treatment includes surgery but can also include nonsurgical therapies
 - Treatments are usually individualized based on health, size, location and degree of spread on the body



Types of Dermatology Procedures

- Destruction
- Biopsy
- Excision
- Incision
- Mohs
- Closure codes
- Cosmetic

- Destruction (CPT codes 17000-17286 & 17340-17999)
 - Removal of benign, premalignant or malignant tissue
 - Methods of destruction
 - Electrosurgery
 - Electrical current is used
 - Cryosurgery
 - Involves application of liquid nitrogen
 - Laser
 - Uses wavelengths of light
 - Chemical treatment
 - Different chemicals used for treatment

- Biopsy- 3 types (CPT 11102-11107)
 - Tangential biopsy
 - Performed by shave, scoop, saucerize or curette
 - Includes simple closure if performed
 - Punch biopsy
 - Involves using a sharp, hollow, circular instrument to remove a small round piece of tissue
 - Includes simple closure if performed
 - Incisional biopsy
 - Involves a cut made through the skin to remove a sample of abnormal tissue
 - Includes simple closure if performed

- Excision (CPT 11400 -11646)
 - Excisions can be performed on benign or malignant areas
 - Excision involves numbing of the area, cutting out the damaged skin tissue, and closing the area
 - Excision is different from incision
 - Incision involves cutting and then usually draining of an abscess not the removal of the abscess

- Pathology

- Pathology involves chemicals being applied to a specimen, and then review of the specimen under a microscope to provide a diagnosis
- Pathology is performed on specimens removed by biopsy to obtain a diagnosis of the removed specimen
- Pathology can also be performed on specimens removed by excision
- Pathology involves two different components- Technical and Professional
 - Technical component is the preparation of the specimen with chemicals
 - Professional component is the process of reviewing the specimen under the microscope to determine the condition (giving a diagnosis)

- Mohs Surgery (CPT 17311-17315)
 - Known as Mohs micrographic surgery
 - Involves removing cancerous skin a layer at a time
 - Each layer is examined under a microscope for cancerous tissue
 - If cancerous tissue is found in the margins of the specimen the process is repeated until no cancerous tissue is found
 - Depending on size of the cancerous area Mohs can be 1 layer or it can be several
 - Mohs surgery sites can involve closure or they can be left to heal naturally depending on the size and depth

- Closure Types (CPT 12001 – 15760)
 - Closures include the use of sutures, staples or tissue adhesives
 - Simple, intermediate, or complex closure
 - Involves closing the area without involving other tissue from the surrounding area or another part of the body
 - Adjacent Tissue Transfer
 - Also known as a flap
 - Involves using surrounding tissue to aid in closing the wound
 - Skin Replacement
 - Also known as a graft
 - Involves removing skin from another part of the body and then applying that to the wound

- Cosmetic Procedures

- Cosmetic procedures are performed because the patient desires the procedure but it is not medically necessary
- Cosmetic procedures are not submitted to insurance
- Examples
 - Patient has a spot on their arm that is not irritated, not precancerous, and not cancerous. The patient just does not like having the spot. The doctor can remove the spot but it would be considered cosmetic and the patient would pay for the removal out of their pocket.
 - A skin tag that catches on someone's clothing and gets irritated can be covered by insurance but a skin tag that is removed just because the patient does not like it is considered cosmetic.
 - Fillers such as Botox for the purpose of minimizing lines and wrinkles is considered cosmetic
 - Laser hair removal would be considered cosmetic

Aestheticians

- Aestheticians
 - Aestheticians perform cosmetic treatments which are not billable to insurance
 - Aestheticians are not medical providers
 - Aestheticians specialize in the beautification of skin
 - Aestheticians perform treatments such as waxing, facials, chemical peels, etc.
 - Aestheticians can treat previously diagnosed skin condition but they cannot diagnose unknown conditions
 - Examples: Acne or eczema

Preventative Visits

- Many insurance companies advertise that they cover preventative visits.
- Certain types of preventative visits are covered however preventative visits by a dermatologist are not covered under this umbrella.
 - When a dermatologist is performing an evaluation there may be skin conditions that are identified and coded. Once this happens the visit is no longer considered preventative.
 - If a patient is seen by their primary care provider and they do a preventative visit of the skin, it would be covered as preventative by insurance.
- This causes a great deal of confusion by patients. When the patients call the insurance, the insurance companies tell them the dermatologist billed incorrectly and need to change their billing.

Free Skin Cancer Screenings

- Some dermatologist will host free skin cancer screenings
- These are different than a preventative visit
- Many times these are held during off business hours
- Many offices still encourage patients to schedule appointments for these
- Nothing is billed to the patients insurance...It's FREE
- These visits are not in-depth evaluations
- If the provider sees something that they feel needs further evaluation they will recommend the patient schedule an appointment

Medical not covered by Insurance

- There are medical diagnosis codes that to us are a major issue but in the eyes of insurance are not considered medically necessary.
- Examples:
 - Alopecia- hair loss
 - Rosacea- redness or blushing in the skin
 - Hyperhidrosis- excessive sweating
- Some insurance may cover the exam for these conditions but not cover treatment of the issue while some insurance plans do not cover anything to do with the diagnosis
- Recommend checking with the patients insurance plan to determine if treatment will be covered and the guidelines for notes and coding to ensure insurance coverage
 - Share this info with the patient in advance so they can determine if they would like to proceed with treatment

Questions



Thank you!

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