



Advisory Services Coding Updates and Information

Topic: COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing

Background:

The American Medical Association (AMA) has expedited approval of a CPT® code for reporting laboratory testing related to the novel coronavirus:

87635 - Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19]), amplified probe technique

The AMA indicated that “the pathology and laboratory section of the CPT code set already contains codes for coronavirus testing. But those are for nucleic acid assays that detect multiple respiratory viruses in a multiplex reaction, while CPT 87635 is for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and any pan-coronavirus types or subtypes.”¹

In response to the release of this code CPT Assistant® (CPTA) published a Fact Sheet to help providers accurately report these testing services by creating a series of Q&A.

The Q&A addresses reporting this new code versus one of two recently released HCPCS that CMS created:

U0001 - CDC 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-ncov) real-time rt-pcr diagnostic panel, for use with CDC developed testing, and

U0002 - 2019-nCoV Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2/2019-nCoV (COVID-19) using any technique, multiple types or subtypes (includes all targets), for non-CDC developed testing (e.g., Hospital specific in-house developed testing)

Guidance:

According to the CPTA, “the appropriate code to be reported is dependent upon the payer to which the claim is being submitted... CPT and HCPCS codes should not both be reported on the same claim.”²

Medicare Claims

- Report the appropriate U-HCPCS code based on the type of test
- Hold claims for testing after February 4 until April 1, 2020 when the HCPCS becomes reportable
- Reimbursement rates may be found at <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/mac-covid-19-test-pricing.pdf>

Third-Party Claims

- Unless otherwise directed report CPT 87635

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/new-cpt-code-covid-19-testing-what-you-should-know>.

² CPT Assistant, Special Edition, Volume 30, 2020.