

- ATTENTION ALL SURGEONS - Are All of Your Patients Being Billed?

One of the most basic procedures to insure you collect all the revenue you are entitled to, is to make sure that a claim form or bill is sent out for every patient seen.

Surgeons sometimes have a more difficult challenge than other specialties whose patients are seen in the office. The physician must have a procedure whereby the work performed at the hospital is recorded and turned into the office where someone must take the responsibility to insure every patient is properly billed.

There are a number of surgeons that use varying procedures to record the work performed in a hospital. Some use a copy of the face sheet from the hospital to record the work performed, while others use forms that were developed internally, or even index cards. Then it is a challenge for the surgeon to insure the information is delivered to the office in a timely manner so that the claims can be filed promptly. If billing is handled internally through the doctors office, someone should have the responsibility to insure that the doctor has turned in all paperwork required to allow a proper claim to be filed on every patient. If any paperwork is missing for a particular patient that is on schedule, the doctor should be notified immediately.

If you're using a billing service, we recommend that the appointment schedule for the week be turned over with all of the related claims information so that there is an independent check to insure that a claim or bill is being sent to every patient.

Another challenge is the timeliness with which patients are billed. If you are one of the many physicians who do not give a priority to getting the data on procedures performed into the billing cycle, then you can expect your cash flow to suffer.

A rather simple procedure can be performed to determine if there are any problems in this area within your office. Consider performing an audit of the past three months. This could be performed by anyone not directly involved in the billing activity in your office. Ask that person to compare your appointment schedule to the bills sent out and insure there has been a bill sent for everyone on your schedule. Make sure 100% of the patients on the appointment schedule are accounted for as billed, or make sure there is documentation if they are not. While this may seem rather simplistic, a few patients missed per year can literally cost the practice thousands of dollars.

In summary, perform an audit to determine if your procedures have been working effectively to insure that all patients are being billed. If the procedures aren't working, implement the changes necessary to make sure they are.

There are many challenges to physicians to maximize your reimbursements. Make sure you are not giving money away, by simply failing to bill for your hard work.