

April 6, 2021

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RE: CPT code 77014: Computed Tomography Guidance Related to Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) Planning and Treatment Delivery

Dear Dr. Busch:

The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO)<sup>1</sup> has been made aware of recent denials of CT image guidance as part of the delivery of Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware (hereafter, “Highmark”). The following information is provided to clarify the use of CPT code 77014, Computed tomography guidance for placement of radiation therapy fields, with the delivery of Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), which is recognized by G6015 or G6016 in freestanding settings and 77385 or 77386 in hospital settings. These denials are incorrect, and we believe that much of the confusion stems from a January 2017 CMS NCCI edit that no longer allows physicians to bill 77014 to report CT imaging when performed to assist in the development of an IMRT treatment plan (i.e., CPT code 77301, IMRT Treatment Planning). This exclusion, however, does not apply to the use of CT image guidance in the delivery of IMRT (G6015, G6016, 77385 or 77386).

#### Reporting IMRT Treatment Delivery

IMRT treatment delivery reporting is based upon the radiation oncologist’s practice setting. Under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS), HCPCS code G6015 (IMRT treatment delivery) and G6016 (Compensator-based IMRT delivery) are billed in the freestanding radiation oncology setting. In the Hospital Outpatient Payment System (HOPPS), IMRT treatment delivery is divided between two codes based on complexity: simple (CPT code 77385) and complex (CPT code 77386). Both CPT codes 77385 and 77386 include the technical component of image guidance. When reporting the professional component of image guidance with IMRT, physicians must use HCPCS codes G6001, G6002 or CPT code 77014 with the -26 modifier attached.

#### Computed Tomography and IMRT Treatment Delivery

CPT code 77014 is utilized for target localization and to determine positioning adjustments in the daily delivery of IMRT treatments. A radiation oncologist, a medical physicist, or trained radiation therapist under the supervision of the radiation oncologist, reviews the automated image fusion and performs manual or automatic adjustments as necessary. These images may be used for subsequent planning target volume (PTV) determination adapting to patient specific PTV or online guidance. The physician must review any necessary patient positioning adjustments and review all CT images in near real time. Image

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<sup>1</sup> ASTRO members are medical professionals practicing at hospitals and cancer treatment centers in the United States and around the globe. They make up the radiation treatment teams that are critical in the fight against cancer. These teams include radiation oncologists, medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, radiation therapists, oncology nurses, nutritionists and social workers. They treat more than one million cancer patients each year.

guidance is used in patients whose tumors are directly adjacent to critical structures to direct the radiation beam or to track motion during IMRT treatment delivery. *It is a crucial component in IMRT treatment delivery, ensuring maximum patient safety and treatment efficacy.*

Much of the confusion surrounding billing for CT image guidance stems from a CMS National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) edit that precludes physicians from billing 77014 with 77301 (IMRT *Treatment Planning*). It is important to note that the NCCI restriction does **NOT** apply to the use of CT image guidance (77014) in the *delivery* of IMRT, recognized by CPT codes G6015, G6016, 77385 or 77386.

Highmark states that its denial rationale is based upon the “ASTRO/ACR Coding guideline.” Please note that this guidance is no longer published. Instead, enclosed is the *ASTRO Coding Guidance for Use of CT Image Guidance Related to IMRT Planning and Treatment Delivery*, which provides further explanation on how to appropriately report IMRT with Image Guidance Radiation Therapy across practice settings and provides greater detail on IMRT planning and the use of CPT Code 77014. **In light of the above, we urge Highmark to cease these improper denials and remit payments to practices.**

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss our recommendations further, please contact Jessica Adams, Health Policy Analyst (703) 839-7396 or via email at [Jessica.adams@astro.org](mailto:Jessica.adams@astro.org).

Sincerely,



Laura I. Thevenot  
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosed: *Coding Guidance for Use of CT Image Guidance Related to IMRT Planning and Treatment Delivery*