

CT BUSINESS

Reimbursement in the U.S.

Physicians performing CTA and CTC can obtain Medicare coverage – but might have to campaign for it.

Imaging Technology advances all the time. With each new application, it is important to understand how physicians can utilize these applications and, of course, understand how they can procure reimbursement for them at their practices. Over this past year, two Computed Tomography applications have been hot issues in the realm of reimbursement: Coronary CT-Angiography (coronary CTA) and CT-Colonography (CTC). Private insurers might already reimburse these procedures or some physicians might practice in an area where Medicare covers them.

Multislice CTA

Any physicians with Medicare patients and practice in South Carolina, New York, or New Jersey may now be able to obtain reimbursement for coronary CTA. The procedure can be billed in these areas using the reimbursement code for CTA, Chest, without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sections, including post-processing. The reimbursement amounts are covered in table 1. Coverage and the specific amount depends on what region the practice is located

(please refer to your carrier for more detailed requirements). The coverage guidelines for these decisions are broad and make specific note to the use of multislice CT (16+ slices). "In view of the burgeoning interest in cardiac CT imaging, this reimbursement is a big step in the process of growing coverage for these exciting and patient-friendly CT applications," says Michael Poon, MD, chief of cardiology at Cabrini Medical Center, New York City.

Another application making waves in the imaging community is CTC. This year has seen its preliminary addition to the reimbursement catalogue, and, at the time of printing, Medicare of New York/New Jersey is considering coverage for this procedure. Physicians must check with their carrier before billing. A great breakthrough in this area is a Wisconsin physician who, over the summer, was able to petition his HMO to reimburse him for the procedure for his screening of average-risk asymptomatic patients.

This direct appeal from practices to their carriers is growing and finding success. An imaging center in Los Angeles was able to appeal to their carrier for reim-



Michael Poon, MD and chief of cardiology at Cabrini Medical Center in New York City, welcomes growing coverage for coronary CTA.

bursement of Coronary CTA. Devoting a little time to compiling clinical evidence and an appropriate argument could reap benefits for practices, resulting in reimbursement for procedures otherwise not currently paid by their carrier. Taking on a project such as this not only generates increased revenue for their single practice but benefits patients and imaging as a whole.

Siemens understands that reimbursement of procedures is a critical component of physician's workflow, and therefore will continue to provide information and strategies to assist as the climate of reimbursement changes so that they can continue to provide such advanced services to their patients.

[Table 1]

CTA Reimbursement	
CT Coronary Angiography	
New York/New Jersey	\$586.38 – \$763.95
South Carolina	\$517.94