

PRACTICE ADVISORY – Share Medical Appointments

Introduction

Shared medical appointments (SMA) are a healthcare practice approach that provides more access to patients while using existing resources. SMA are a recognized approach that have been shown to provide high quality care at reduce costs.(1; 2) While insurers may recognize these as separately reimbursable appointments, Medicare has yet to provide guidance on the topic. (3)

Description

These are often called group medical appointments or DIGMAs (drop in medical appts). (4) Patients have to sign a confidentiality waiver and HIPPA disclosure form and agree to attend. The provider can provide verbal information to the group as a whole instead of repeating the same thing in individual patient visits. In addition to the group information/education, providers would also have one-on-one patient exam and/or services provided. The idea is also that patients may benefit from shared experiences. The diabetes care team provide individual attention to each patients needs within the group. (4,5,6) Hence, the shared medical appoint is not intended to be a substitute for group diabetes self-management education classes. The SMA usually requires several support staff (scheduler, nurses, someone to do charting, behaviorist if deemed necessary etc). SMA are usually scheduled for patients who have the same chronic disease.

Role of the Diabetes Educator:

The educator is an essential part of the diabetes care team that participates in shared medical appointments. In providing diabetes self-management education and training (DSME/T), the educator: 1) undertakes the diabetes education assessment which requires ongoing collection and interpretation of relevant data, plans the educational intervention, works with the person with diabetes to set behavioral goals, follows up with DSME/T and diabetes self-management support (DSMS).

Reimbursement/Coding

It is recommended that providers contact their payers and/or Medicare Contractor for specifics on billing for shared medical appointments.

Citations

1. No authors listed. Capitation Shared medical appointments save money for capitated groups. Manag Rep. 2003 Feb;10(2):20-4, 17.
2. Sidorsky T, Huang Z, Dinulos JGA business case for shared medical appointments in dermatology: improving access and the bottom line. Arch Dermatol. 2010 Apr;146(4):374-81.
3. AAFP, Coding for Group Visits. 2009.
4. Weinger K. Group Medical Appointments in Diabetes Care: Is There a Future? Diabetes Spectrum; 16(2) 2003:104-7.
5. Noffsinger EB. Physicals Shared Medical Appointments: A Revolutionary Access Solution. Group Practice Journal. Jan 2002; 1-9.
6. American Academy of Family Physicians. Group Visits: Shared Medical Appointments. AAFP. Sept 2010.
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