

## Physics –

# Radiation Oncology Coding Standard

CPT® Codes: 77336, 77370, and 77790

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## Continuing Medical Physics (CPT® Code 77336)

### *Technical Only*

**77336** Continuing medical physics consultation, including assessment of treatment parameters, quality assurance of dose delivery, and review of patient treatment documentation in support of the radiation oncologist, reported per week of therapy

Continuing medical physics is commonly referred to as “weekly physics.” It is billed for the quality assurance of dose delivery from a machine or source, as well as review of the charts and documentation of dosimetry plans, calculations, and other items such as elapsed days, cumulative dose, and other entries within the patient’s chart. Essentially, the continuing medical physics service assures that the physician’s prescription is delivered accurately.

Continuing medical physics is billable once per five fraction period. If there are an additional 3 – 4 treatment fractions remaining at the end of treatment beyond the last collection of 5 treatments, an additional unit of CPT® code 77336 may be submitted for payment. For example, a patient receiving 27 treatments may have five continuing physics charges and a patient receiving 28 fractions of treatment may have six charges of continuing physics, if each subset has had physics review and documentation within each five-fraction period. Continuing medical physics chart checks are billable for the last 3-5 fraction period when checks occur during the 3-5 fraction period. A review of the medical record by the medical physicist occurring well after the treatment has been finalized is not billable. Continuing medical physics is also billable for complete courses of therapy consisting of 1-2 fractions of therapy. This may be the case for two-dimensional conventional radiation therapy (2DCRT), three-dimensional conformal radiation therapy (3DCRT), stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) or other modalities, except for single fraction brachytherapy.

### Standards for CPT® Code 77336

- CPT® code 77336 is billable only once per five fractions of treatment. At least three fractions of therapy must occur at the end of the course for an additional continuing physics

charge to be billed. CPT® code 77336 will be approved at a quantity equal to the number of authorized fractions divided by 5, rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.

- CPT® code 77336 is billable only one time for courses of therapy consisting of 1-2 fractions.

CPT® code 77336 should not be billed for a treatment delivery course involving CPT® code 77401 (i.e., superficial or orthovoltage radiation therapy).

## Special Physics Consult (CPT® Code 77370)

### *Technical Only*

#### **77370** Special medical radiation physics consultation

CPT® code 77370 is utilized for situations where the physician requests a qualified medical physicist's expertise for a specific reason for a patient undergoing or about to undergo radiotherapy. Appropriate use of CPT® code 77370 with brachytherapy, proton beam therapy, stereotactic body radiation therapy, stereotactic radiosurgery, and three-dimensional conformal radiation therapy and fusion of image data sets would only include those instances where treatment planning is 3D, a specific request to evaluate a clinical scenario is needed, and the qualified medical physicist is the only one with the expertise to provide the necessary work to complete the request. For IMRT, only when there is a specific clinical scenario outside of intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) treatment planning where a qualified medical physicist is consulted would 77370 be billable. CPT® code 77370 is not for a treatment planning summary or other services, which are defined by an established CPT® code and are reimbursed by that code. Dosimetry treatment planning is reimbursed with its respective CPT® code.

IMRT quality assurance (QA) is a required part of IMRT planning (CPT® code 77301). Consequently, reimbursement for IMRT QA is included in CPT® code 77301, and IMRT QA is not separately billable as a special physics consult. There may be instances in which a special physics consultation is medically necessary for a patient receiving IMRT. However, this should not be a routine occurrence.

Whenever CPT® code 77370 is requested, documentation must be provided in the medical record for the specific request from the physician, the work performed by the medical physicist, and the physician's acknowledgement of the results.

### Standards for CPT® Code 77370

- CPT® code 77370 is allowed one time per course of therapy.
- Special physics consultation (CPT® code 77370) services must be requested by the provider.

- A special physics consultation (CPT® code 77370) is approvable for:
  - Abutting or overlapping fields due to previous radiation with assessment of the cumulative radiation dose to critical organs
  - Analysis of customized beam modification devices and special blocking procedures (and their dosimetric evaluation) to protect critical organs during treatment (but not for an IMRT plan)
  - Complex interrelationships of electron and photon ports (yet not for an electron boost for breast cancer)
  - Computation of dose to the fetus of a pregnant patient undergoing radiotherapy
  - Coronary artery brachytherapy
  - **Fusion by a qualified medical physicist of three-dimensional image sets from multiple modalities (CT, MRI, and PET)**, analysis of slice thickness and pixel size, signal intensity and geometric distortion, as related to lesion and organ at risk delineation uncertainty, etc., **with non-IMRT treatment planning**. For example, CPT® code 77370 is approvable for image fusion with three-dimensional conformal radiation therapy. Also, CPT® code 77370 is approvable for image fusion with proton beam therapy and 3D treatment planning. In addition, CPT® code 77370 is approvable for image fusion with SRS/SBRT and 3D treatment planning, e.g., with a Gamma Knife.
  - Issues regarding corrective measures to solve a discrepancy and/or an error
  - Personal participation by the qualified medical physicist in the delivery of a complex treatment fraction in exceptional situations that require the physical presence of the physicist for direct oversight of the technical and/or radiation safety aspects of the treatment. Examples include certain brachytherapy treatments, radioisotope therapy (such as radioimmunotherapy or selective internal radiation therapy) or intravascular brachytherapy
  - Review of the safety requirements for the treatment of patients with implanted cardiac devices such as a pacemaker or defibrillator in proximity to treatment fields
  - Selective internal radiation therapy (maximum of 1 unit per course of treatment, e.g., maximum of 1 unit for 89 Gy in 2 fractions)
  - Special brachytherapy equipment developed by the qualified medical physicist to treat a particular patient
- When a special physics consultation is requested for a scenario not discussed above, a patient-specific medical necessity rationale is required. CPT® code 77370 is approvable when ALL the following criteria are met:
  - The rationale is supplied by the provider
  - CPT® code 77370 has not been previously authorized within the same course of therapy
  - The rationale explains the need for a medical physicist's expertise, which is not related to a treatment-planning summary, IMRT QA, or services described by another CPT® code
- A special physics consultation (CPT® code 77370) is not approvable for:
  - Deep inspiration breath-hold (DIBH)
  - Electron cutout measurements
  - IMRT QA
  - In-vivo dosimetry

- Routine verification of dose distribution
- Secondary monitor unit calculations
- Services defined by another CPT® code
- SRS or SBRT with IMRT planning
- Treatment planning summaries
- Requests not identified as meeting the criteria outlined above will require a peer-to-peer physician review.

## Supervision and Handling (CPT® Code 77790)

### *Technical Component-Only Code*

- **77790** Supervision, handling and loading of a radiation source

Supervision and handling represent the handling and loading of the radioactive source throughout the procedure. Handling and loading are billable for low dose rate (LDR) brachytherapy. Also, CPT® code 77790 is billable for therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals. CPT® code 77790 is a technical component-only code. There is no associated physician work.

### Standards for CPT® Code 77790

- One (1) CPT® code 77790 is allowed per LDR brachytherapy or therapeutic radiopharmaceutical application, except for those scenarios where CPT® code 77790 is considered bundled with the treatment delivery such as CPT® codes 77750, 77761-77763, 77778, 77789, and 79101-79445.

### *Sources:*

The Coding Standards are created and maintained by Evolent based on our understanding of current:

- Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) Level I (also known as Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®)) codes beginning with a number, HCPCS Level II codes beginning with a letter, and other data are copyrighted by the American Medical Association (AMA). No fee schedules, basic units, relative values, or related listings are included in HCPCS Level I or II codes. AMA does not directly or indirectly practice medicine or dispense medical services.
- American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) Radiation Oncology Coding Resource
- Medicare's Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs) and National Coverage Determination (NCD) for radiation oncology
- Office of the Inspector General (OIG) compliance standards
- National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) edits
- National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) Policy Manual
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Internet Only Manuals (IOM).