New & Improved: Bunionectomy Coding

These changes have been a long time coming.

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Welcome to Codingline Particulars, a regular feature in Podiatry Management focusing on foot and ankle coding, billing, and practice management issues.

According to Kelikian and others, the term "bunion" may have come from
• *Bugnone* (Italian) lump
• *Buigne* (French) bump (pronounced boomp)
• *Bunny* (old English) jump
• *Bunki* (Scandinavian) brunch
• *Bovvos* (Greek) hill or eminence

In 2017, we finally revised the "correction, hallux valgus" family of code section, adding some codes, getting rid of some codes, and overall improving coding descriptions.

Since we were at it, we also added, for the first time anywhere in the world, new bunion and bunionette (baby bunion) ICD-10-CM codes.

From ICD-10 with Love: "Bunions & Bunionettes"

In the old ICD-9 days, if you looked up "bunion" in the Alphabetic Index, you would find it wedged between "bratwurst knee" and "Bunyamwera fever". Bunionette was also there between "baloney cheeks" and "buphthalmia". Note these are two distinct deformities of the foot amazingly sharing the same diagnosis code: ICD-9 727.1 .How could this be, you ask?

Along comes ICD-10 with its 68,000 codes and, wouldn't you know

it, someone forgot to include both bunion or bunionette. In fairness, if you looked really hard under the "hallux valgus, acquired" code, you would have seen "Inclusion Term: bunion" sharing the same codes, M20.11 (hallux valgus, acquired, right foot) and M20.12 (hallux valgus, acquired, left foot)…but no sign anywhere in ICD-10 of bunionette.

The APMA ICD-10 team brought this up to CDC/CMS. It was explained that a bunion is a different deformity than hallux valgus and that a bunio-

nette is also a distinctly different deformity. Reason prevailed. Introducing the 2017 ICD-10-CM additions.

M21.611 bunion of right foot
M21.612 bunion of left foot
M21.619 bunion of unspecified foot
M21.621 bunionette of right foot
M21.622 bunionette of left foot
M21.629 bunionette of unspecified foot

By the way, the APMA team asked that "bunionette" be replaced with "tailor's bunion", but apparently the World Health Organization (WHO) is not familiar with the term. At least we

got the separate codes. Now let's hope payers program their software to recognize and accept them.

Bunionectomy Coding for 2017

The bunionectomy family of codes typically begin, "Correction, hallux valgus (bunion)". One of the problems with this is that some professional coders reviewing claims look for "hallux valgus correction" to match the CPT description while many foot and ankle specialists use the term "bunionectomy" or "hallux abduc-

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tovalgus correction". In order to reduce the confusion, it was decided to substitute "bunionectomy" for "bunion" in the parentheticals. Additionally, it was agreed that all proper names for procedures would have to go…and they did. It was also decided for practical purposes that the cheilectomy code would be included in the bunionectomy family of codes. Introducing your new bunionectomy codes (in red font) and descriptions (in bold):

CPT 28289 Hallux rigidus correction with cheilectomy, debridement and capsular release of the first metatarsophalangeal joint; *without implant*

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CPT 28291 Hallux rigidus correction with cheilectomy, debridement and capsular release of the first metatarsophalangeal joint; with implant

Goodbye, CPT 28290—deleted

CPT 28292 Correction, hallux valgus *(bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with resection of proximal phalanx base, when performed, any method*

Goodbye, CPT 28293—deleted
[see CPT 28291 for a 1st metatarsophalangeal joint implant]

Goodbye, CPT 28294—deleted (Joplin, we'll miss you…not)

CPT 28295 Correction, hallux valgus (bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with proximal metatarsal osteotomy, any method

CPT 28296 Correction, hallux valgus *(bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with distal metatarsal osteotomy, any method*

CPT 28297 Correction, hallux valgus *(bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with first metatarsal and medial cuneiform joint arthrodesis, any method*

CPT 28298 Correction, hallux valgus *(bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with proximal phalanx osteotomy, any method*

CPT 28299 Correction, hallux valgus *(bunionectomy), with sesamoidectomy, when performed; with double osteotomy, any method*

CPT 28299, by the way, was clarified with illustrations that show 3 surgical options for "double osteotomy":

1) Bunionectomy with distal 1st metatarsal osteotomy and hallux proximal phalanx osteotomy;

2) Bunionectomy with proximal 1st metatarsal osteotomy and hallux proximal phalanx osteotomy; or

3) Bunionectomy with distal and proximal 1st metatarsal osteotomies.

Is it perfect? No, changing "correction, hallux valgus" to read "bunionectomy (correction, hallux abductovalgus)" would be best, but…a fight for another decade.

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Dr. Goldsmith of Cerritos, CA is editor of Codingline.com and recipient of the Podiatry Management Lifetime Achievement Award.