

When is a patient New versus Established?

Question: If a patient comes for an office visit today and the attending physician has billed for an EKG interpretation two months prior, is this patient considered a new versus established patient?

Answer: The attending physician should bill for a new patient at the face-to-face office visit.

Rationale: Per CMS's guidance in Publication 100-04, Chapter 12, Section 30.6.7 of the *Medicare Claims Processing Manual*: Interpret the phrase "new patient" to mean a patient who has not received any professional services, i.e., E/M service or other face-to-face service (e.g., surgical procedure) from the physician or physician group practice (same physician specialty) within the previous 3 years.

An interpretation of a diagnostic test, reading an x-ray or EKG, etc., in the absence of an E/M service or other face-to-face service with the patient does not affect the designation of a new patient.