

Dermatology Coding Alert

Reader Question: Does Destruction Include Cryotherapy? Read On

Question: I am not familiar with histofreezer treatment for skin lesions. Can you tell me which CPT code I should use to report this form of therapy? Our practice generally reports codes for destruction of lesions (17000-17004 and 17260-17286), which include cryosurgery, but I am not sure this is correct. Also, what is the HCPCS code to use for the histofreezer, and what is its reimbursement?

Virginia Subscriber

Answer: The histofreezer is a cryotherapy system that physicians use to treat skin conditions such as seborrheic keratosis.

You're correct to use the lesion destruction codes, such as 17000 (Destruction [e.g., laser surgery, electrosurgery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, surgical curettage], all benign or premalignant lesions [e.g., actinic keratoses], other than skin tags or cutaneous vascular proliferative lesions; first lesion), because these codes include the method of destruction, such as cryotherapy.

You should not report a HCPCS code to indicate the physician used the histofreezer to destroy the lesion. Carriers reimburse this procedure under the Physician Fee Schedule according to the specific destruction code you report.

- Answers to You Be the Coder and Reader Questions were reviewed by **Pamela J. Biffle, CPC, CCS-P**, an independent consultant in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and an American Academy of Professional Coders instructor; **Linda Martien, CPC, CPC-H**, National Healthcare Review in Woodland Hills, Calif.; and **William J. Conner, MD**, physician at Meridian Medical Group, a multispecialty practice in Charlotte, N.C.