

Ask Dr. Miller



March 2022

The following questions were posed by NBCCEDP recipients:

Question #1: Does CDC require a physician to approve mammogram orders or can a nurse practitioner approve mammogram orders?

Answer: CDC does not have a requirement for mammogram orders to be approved. That may exist within a specific medical clinic. But it is not a federal requirement for the NBCCEDP.

Question #2: We had an inquiry from one of our providers regarding payment for an axillary lymph node biopsy. The patient had an abnormal mammogram and underwent a left breast biopsy and a left axillary lymph node biopsy. The lymph node biopsy is not on our list of allowable procedures. So we wanted to inquire if this is a service that may be allowed for reimbursement. If it is reasonable, what CPT code should we use?

Answer: On occasion, an enlarged lymph node may show up on a mammogram and could be an indication of breast cancer in the lymph node. When there are suspicious findings in both the breast and axilla on a mammogram, it is reasonable to perform both a breast biopsy and a lymph node biopsy. In this scenario, you can cover the lymph node biopsy along with the breast biopsy. The CPT code is either 38505 for a needle biopsy or 38500 for an open biopsy.

Question #3: Can our program cover the reimbursement for contrast material with a breast MRI?

Answer: Yes, you can pay for the contrast if requested by the provider. The decision whether to use contrast often depends on the type of the problem and the medical history given by the patient.

Question #4: We had an individual referred to our program for a breast MRI because she tested positive for the CHEK2 genetic mutation. Are we able to pay for breast MRIs for those individuals who test positive for these other genetic mutations and not just BRCA?

Answer: CHEK2 is one of several genetic mutations that increases an individual's risk for breast cancer. A patient with any genetic mutation should discuss this finding with a provider and develop a screening plan. They should also have genetic counseling as she may be at risk for other cancers. Breast MRI can be provided through the NBCCEDP for an individual who is determined to be a high risk for breast cancer based on other genetic mutations besides BRCA as long as you have documentation from their provider that they are at high risk and enhanced screening is warranted.

Question #5: Is there any flexibility with reimbursing higher than the Medicare rate?

Answer: Under the federal law, the NBCCEDP reimbursement cannot exceed the Medicare rate. There are circumstances when CMS provides a higher rate for a clinic such as for Medicare certified rural health clinics that have a separate reimbursement structure under Medicare. Each program must follow the Medicare rates set for their jurisdiction.