

FAMILY DOCS NOT CODING 17003 CORRECTLY

Medicare released the 2016 utilization files showing all of the codes billed out by each specialty and in reviewing those, we conclude that family physicians are not billing for destructions of premalignant lesions correctly. There are 3 codes:

- 17000 for the first lesion only**
- 17003 for the 2nd through 14th lesion, each**
- 17004 for the 15 lesions or more total (one charge**

Dermatologists use code 17003 a total of 5.3 more times as often as code 17000. This means that the patient coming in to get lesions destroyed have an average of 6.3 lesions destroyed at a sitting (one charge of 17000 and 5 charges of 17003).

Family physicians are seeing the same patients - and are probably destroying the same number of lesions, but their cumulative average is 2.7 instead of 5.3. It might be that the doctor's staff do not know how to bill them or it could be that the family doctor is not reporting to the billing staff how many they are destroying.