

## SOMB Update - Cataract Pre-Op Medicals

Dear Family Physician,

Through the SOMB Rules Initiative process, the pre-operative history and physical examination for cataract surgery done under local anesthetic was reviewed and ultimately considered a low value service. I have heard from many family physicians that have questions on this topic, and have asked the AMA's Health Economics department for clarification. I have received the following information:

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### **Billing 03.04M**

Payment for cataract pre-operative medicals will only be made when the pre-op is performed for a patient that requires a general anesthetic for a cataract procedure. The 03.04M may not be claimed by the operating surgeon, but can be claimed by a GP. In those rare instances that a general anesthetic is required, the need for a general should be communicated to the physician that will be completing the pre-op medical. This information must be included in the text portion of the GPs claim for the 03.04M pre-op medical.

Alberta Health will manually review 03.04M claims submitted with text and make payment as appropriate. When a claim for a cataract procedure is submitted, the payment system will review claims submitted in the previous 30 days from the surgery; if a pre-op medical (03.04M) has been submitted without text, the payment for the 03.04M will be reversed.

### **Billing 03.08A**

For patients NOT receiving a general anesthetic, the pre-op medical and form completion is still a requirement, but this service should be completed by the operating surgeon (ophthalmologist).

In those rare instances where consultation is required for services that do not require a general anesthetic, the opinion of another physician (GP) may be required prior to surgery. In these cases, a GP consultation may be requested by the operating surgeon (ophthalmologist) and the 03.08A will be applicable if the criteria for consultation are met and clear documentation is maintained (i.e. a letter of request from the surgeon and the reason/s the consultation is required).

\*\*Please note that AH will be closely monitoring this, therefore ensuring proper documentation is a must.

Physicians and clinic staff are encouraged to educate their patients prior to making appointments for pre-op services. Pre-op medicals may not be claimed to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan for services related to dental procedures (except where conditions in GR. 10 are met), uninsured services/cosmetic procedures and cataract surgery not requiring a general anesthetic.

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## **Maintaining Standards of Care**

While we recognize that this rule change supports the principles of *Choosing Wisely*, there are, of course, exceptions to the rule. SGP encourages all family physicians to work cooperatively with our ophthalmologist colleagues to maintain the best quality of care for our patients, while ensuring fair and appropriate compensation for the services required.

Further questions regarding pre-operative histories and physical examinations for cataract surgeries can be directed to Dr. Lyle Mittelsteadt, Senior Medical Advisor,  
AMA: [lyle.mittelsteadt@albertadoctors.org](mailto:lyle.mittelsteadt@albertadoctors.org).

We welcome any feedback you may have on this or other GP related issues. Please feel free to get in touch at [gppres@albertadoctors.org](mailto:gppres@albertadoctors.org).

Regards,

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President - AMA Section of General Practice