

Uncompensated Emergency Department Imaging: An Analysis of 18 Million Services over 4 Years by 2,935 Radiologists Nationwide

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PURPOSE

To study the frequency, magnitude, and other characteristics of uncompensated services provided by radiologists in the emergency department (ED) setting

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Using patient- and physician-redacted billing claims for 2,935 radiologists from 40 states between January 2009 through December 2012, 18,475,491 professional services performed in the ED setting were identified. Analysis focused on the 133 of all reported 830 Category I CPT and HCPCS codes which comprised 99.0% (18,296,734) of all rendered services. The frequency, magnitude, and other characteristics of uncompensated (defined as zero payment) radiologist services were analyzed. National 2012 Medicare physician fee schedule amounts were used to estimate dollar value of services.

RESULTS

Of 2,935 radiologists, 2,835 (96.6%) provided uncompensated care to ED patients, averaging \$2,483 per physician per service month. Radiologists received no compensation at all for 28.4% (5,194,732/18,296,734) of services rendered to ED patients. Most frequently rendered services were: 1-view CXR (600,547 uncompensated of 2,885,729 total; 20.8%), 2-view CXR (634,932/2,246,987; 28.3%), non-contrast brain CT (536,947/2,028,049; 26.5%), contrast abdomen/pelvis (AP) CT (147,793/512,816; 28.8%), and non-contrast AP CT (124,844/452,860; 27.6%). Most frequent modalities were radiography (2,916,912/10,664,437 total; 27.4% uncompensated), CT (1,658,511/5,701,654; 29.1%) and US (541,397/1,615,578; 33.5%). Although CT represented 31.2% of ED services, it accounted for 64.8% of uncompensated dollars. Of all uncompensated services, 52.3% (2,714,506) were rendered to uninsured patients and 47.7% (2,480,226) to insured patients (e.g., insurer denial, patient non-payment of deductible).

CONCLUSION

Over 28% of services radiologists rendered by radiologists to ED patients are on a completely uncompensated basis, corresponding to \$2,483 per month per physician. Both frequency and magnitude are likely underestimated by many.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Of services rendered by radiologists to ED patients, 28.4% are without compensation, corresponding to \$2,483 per physician per month. The frequency and magnitude may impact patient access. Of services

Disclosure Index

M

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