



Implementing In-Office Fluoroscopy

This real-time imaging technique offers numerous diagnostic benefits.

BY LUKE HUNTER, DPM

Practice Management Pearls is a regular feature that focuses on practice management issues presented by successful DPMs who are members of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management. Visit www.aappm.org for more information.

Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of medical diagnostics, technology plays a pivotal role in improving patient care and outcomes. One such advancement that has gained prominence is in-office fluoroscopy, a real-time imaging technique that offers numerous diagnostic benefits. This article delves into the advantages of in-office fluoroscopy and how it can become a game-changer for both healthcare providers and patients.

Understanding Fluoroscopy

Fluoroscopy is a medical imaging technique that uses X-rays to obtain real-time moving images of the internal structures of a patient's body. Unlike traditional X-rays that capture static images, fluoroscopy can allow foot and ankle surgeons to visualize dynamic processes such as the movement of joints in 3 dimensions, or the localization of foreign objects, or better visualization of hardware.

Advantage 1: Convenience and Accessibility

One of the primary benefits of in-office fluoroscopy is the increased convenience and accessibility it offers to both healthcare providers and pa-

tients. Traditionally, patients had to schedule appointments at radiology centers or hospitals for fluoroscopic procedures, leading to potential delays in diagnosis and treatment. With in-office fluoroscopy, healthcare providers can perform these examinations on-site, reducing the need for coordinating external appointments and minimizing the time and effort required for patients (and doctors) to travel to different facilities.

This enhanced convenience not only improves the overall patient ex-

perience but also allows healthcare professionals to conduct timely and efficient diagnostic procedures, leading to faster decision-making regarding treatment plans.

Advantage 3: Minimized Radiation Exposure

In-office fluoroscopy systems are designed with advanced technology that allows for the minimization of radiation exposure to both pa-

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tients and healthcare providers. Mini C-arms are equipped with dose-reduction features, optimizing image quality while keeping radiation exposure as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA). This is a crucial consideration, especially in cases where frequent or prolonged fluoroscopic imaging is necessary.

Advantage 2: Immediate Results and Real-Time Monitoring

By minimizing radiation exposure, in-office fluoroscopy prioritizes patient and medical staff safety without compromising the diagnostic value of the procedure. This feature is particularly relevant in pediatric imaging, where reducing radiation exposure is a primary concern due to

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TABLE 1

Additional Radiology CPT® Codes that a C-arm Empowers

CPT® Code*	Abbreviated CPT® Description	2024 National Medicare Average**
77071	Stress fluoroscopy (includes contralateral joint if necessary)	\$54
77002	Fluoro guidance for needle placement (e.g. biopsy, aspiration, injection, localization of foreign body, etc.)	\$114
77077	Joint survey, single view, 2 or more joints	\$46
76000	Fluoro time, up to 1 hr	\$42

* Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) is copyright by the American Medical Association. All rights reserved. CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association (AMA).

** <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/physician-fee-schedule/search>

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the increased sensitivity of developing tissues to ionizing radiation.

Advantage 4: Cost-Efficiency

In addition to its clinical benefits, in-office fluoroscopy offers significant cost advantages. Setting up an in-office surgical or fluoroscopy suite eliminates the need for patients to visit external imaging facilities, reducing overall healthcare costs asso-

ciated with transportation and external service fees. Moreover, unnecessary expenditures are paramount. There are additional potential savings for patients for fluoroscopy expenses are significantly cheaper than other imaging modalities such as CTs and MRIs.

Advantage 5: Enhanced Patient Engagement and Education

In-office fluoroscopy provides an opportunity for enhanced patient engagement and education. Patients can actively participate in their diagnostic

complex medical information and make informed decisions about their treatment options.

Proper Coding for Fluoroscopy Procedures

In addition to providing more clinically relevant information than standard plain films, the utilization of a C-arm opens up a spectrum of other coding scenarios and potential reimbursement streams. The presence of a C-arm not only instills greater confidence in surgeons undertaking in-office procedures but also facilitates the expansion of minor bone surgeries within the office setting, given the acquisition of supplementary surgical instruments. Delve into Table 1, showcasing additional radiology CPT® codes that a C-arm empowers.

It should be noted that if you are performing procedures described by CPT® Code 77002-76000, in a facility that owns the fluoroscopy equipment, regardless of whether you are also performing and interpreting the fluoroscopy, you can only submit claims for your professional interpretation of the results and not the entire global component. In these circumstances, the appropriate CPT® codes need to be amended with the 26 modifier. The rationale here is that because you do not own the equipment, you do not deserve the

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ciated with transportation and external service fees. Moreover, healthcare providers can optimize their resources by efficiently utilizing in-office equipment, leading to cost savings in the long run.

From a patient perspective, the reduced need for multiple appointments at different locations translates into lower out-of-pocket expenses and a more streamlined healthcare experience. This cost-efficiency is especially crucial in the current healthcare landscape, where the optimization of resources and the reduction of

process by observing the real-time images on the fluoroscopy monitor and gaining a better understanding of their condition. This visual engagement can lead to improved patient compliance with treatment plans and a heightened sense of involvement in their own healthcare journey.

Moreover, healthcare providers can use in-office fluoroscopy to explain the intricacies of a diagnosis or a planned intervention directly to the patient. Visual aids can significantly improve health literacy, making it easier for patients to comprehend

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reimbursement for the RVU associated with those expenses. The facility owning the equipment is responsible for submitting a claim for the appropriate CPT® TC (Technical Component). Similarly, because the facility

incorporated into the patient's chart notes. The rationale for performing the procedure under fluoroscopy should also be documented.

Conclusion

In-office fluoroscopy has emerged as a transformative technology in the

As technology continues to advance, the integration of in-office fluoroscopy into routine medical practice is likely to become more widespread, further revolutionizing the way healthcare professionals approach diagnostic imaging. By leveraging the advantages of in-office fluoroscopy, the medical community can continue to enhance patient care, optimize resource utilization, and improve overall healthcare outcomes.

Please check with your state society and state and local laws on radiology prior to implementing a C-arm into your practice. **PM**

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did not provide a written report of interpretation, only the provider is eligible for reimbursement for the professional component.

Documentation

A full and complete report (as radiologists provide you for MRI, CT, Tc Scanning, etc.) is expected to be

realm of medical diagnostics, offering a multitude of benefits that extend beyond mere convenience. The immediate results, real-time monitoring, minimized radiation exposure, cost-efficiency, and enhanced patient engagement make in-office fluoroscopy a potential game-changer for both healthcare providers and patients.



Dr. Hunter is a podiatrist in North Louisiana. He is involved with the APMA Billing and Coding Committee as well as being on the Board of the AAPPM.
