New Code for Syphilis Testing

The following new CPT code became effective January 1, 2010.

86780 Antibody, Treponema pallidum

This code replaces CPT code 86781 (Antibody, Treponema pallidum, confirmatory test) which was deleted from the 2010 CPT.

The purpose of this change was to allow initial screening using an antibody test with confirmation by a non-antibody test or the conventional practice of first running a non-antibody test (i.e., RPR, VDRL, ART) and then confirming with an antibody test.

The CPT codes for non-treponemal antibody testing were also revised as follows for additional clarity:

86592 Syphilis test, nontreponemal antibody, qualitative, (eg, VDRL, RPR, ART)

86593 Syphilis test, nontreponemal antibody, quantitative (eg, VDRL, RPR, ART)

A number of current coverage policies for syphilis testing require that a non-antibody test be performed before an antibody test will be covered. Since these policies reference now deleted code 86781, the existence of a new code should prompt payers to revise their policies to allow either sequence of screening and confirmation. In coverage policy where covered ICD-9 codes are still linked to the deleted code, use of the new code should now allow initial screening by antibody assay. When in doubt, contact the payer regarding their exact policy.