

Coding Hemoglobinopathy testing by Capillary Electrophoresis

On November 5, 2007 Sebia submitted a request to the AM for a new code to be created for high resolution capillary electrophoresis separation. The rationale for this request was that capillary electrophoresis is "...an intermediary type of technique between classical zone electrophoresis and liquid chromatography". Although protein separation in capillary electrophoresis occurs due to electroosmotic flow, the instrumentation operates like HPLC since samples flow through columns (i.e. capillaries) and proteins are detected directly by absorbance at 415 nm without staining.

The official response from the CPT Editorial Panel of February 7-9, 2008 was to support the Pathology Coding Caucus (PCC) opinion that, "The PCC does not support (the) proposal as the current codes can be used to code this service."

The two current PCC-accepted codes for Hemoglobinopathy testing are:

83020 Hemoglobin; fractionation and quantitation, electrophoresis (eg, A2, S, C, and/or F

83021 Hemoglobin; fractionation and quantitation, chromatography (eg, A2, S, C, and/or F)

As the previous AMA Editorial Panel decision was to negate a specific code for capillary and use one of the existing codes, laboratories moving from HPLC to capillary are seeking reassurance that using either 83021 or 83020 is appropriate and falls under the intent of the PCC's prior guidance.

As it is up to the laboratory to choose the most appropriate code to use, Sebia contacted the AMA CPT to confirm that the direction provided by the CPT Editorial Panel from 2007 is that either code (83020 or 83021) is still appropriate to report capillary electrophoresis.

This is the written response we received to our inquiry to the AMA dated January 18, 2021.

"From a CPT coding perspective, based upon the limited information provided in your inquiry, capillary electrophoresis appears to be currently reported with existing codes 83020, 83021. You may also wish to contact your local third-party payors, as they may have additional information and requirements for reporting these codes. Thank you for your inquiry, and we hope this information is of assistance to you."