Appropriate CPT® Coding For the Alere™ PBP2a Test

Dear Valued Customer,

The Alere™ PBP2a Test is a rapid immunochromatographic membrane assay that uses highly sensitive monoclonal antibodies to detect PBP2a from isolates identified as S. aureus. (Note: A S. aureus test must be performed before using the Alere™ PBP2a Test.) There is no specific CPT code for PBP2a testing. The appropriate code based on the Alere™ PBP2a methodology and sample type is:

87147: Culture, typing; immunologic method, other than immunofluorescence (e.g., agglutination grouping), per antiserum.

The 2010 Medicare National Limit* for CPT code 87147 is $7.41**

The American Medical Association (AMA) states that modifier 59 be used when separate results are reported for different species or strains that are described by the same code. The Alere™ PBP2a Test shares the same CPT code as a rapid S. aureus test using immunologic method other than immunofluorescence. If performing both a rapid S. aureus test and the Alere™ PBP2a Test the recommended coding is:

- A rapid S. aureus test: CPT code 87147
- Alere™ PBP2a Test: CPT code 87147-59

Please note:

- Although it is appropriate to code and bill both rapid S. aureus and Alere™ PBP2a tests separately, it is important to note that the payment policy of the insurance company may not reimburse the hospital/clinic for both tests. As such, the hospital/clinic should bill for both tests to determine the insurance company’s payment policies.
  - If payment denial is for “duplicate billing” the denial should be challenged by the hospital with the insurance company’s customer support office.
  - If payment denial is for payment policy, the policy should be challenged by the hospital with the insurance company’s Medical Director.
• If the third party insurance carrier (such as Medicare) accepts modifiers and a rapid S. aureus test is performed, use AMA CPT modifier “–59” for one of the tests. Modifier “–59” indicates that the code is for a unique and distinct test when the same CPT code is used for the same patient on the same day of service. For example, a rapid S. aureus test can be billed under CPT 87147 and Alere™ PBP2a Test under CPT 87147-59.

• Some insurance carriers do not recognize modifiers and in such cases CPT code 87147 should be used twice without the “–59” modifier, and if one code is denied as duplicate billing, a follow-up by the hospital with the insurance company to dispute the denial will be required.

If you have further questions, please contact your local Alere Account Executive or call our support line at (877) 441-7440.

*These amounts are the Medicare National Limits. State averages and private insurance carrier averages may vary.

**Per Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services 2010 Clinical Diagnostic Laboratory Fee Schedule, 12/23/09, www.cms.hhs.gov/ClinicalLabFeeSched/02_clinlab.asp; subject to change.

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