Overuse and Misuse of CPT Code 99285

Recently the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System’s (AHCCCS) Claims Medical Review Unit informed UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of an increased use of CPT code 99285 on claims billed for emergency room visits.

Many of the AHCCCS-identified claims DO NOT fulfill and document the components of the 99285 emergency codes being billed. When billing CPT code 99285, the following information is required:

- A comprehensive history
- A comprehensive examination
- Medical decision-making of high complexity

To use CPT code 99285 for billing, the presenting problem(s) during an emergency room visit are expected to include the following: medical conditions that are of high severity, are potentially life threatening, and require the immediate attention of a physician.

Services for constipation, earaches and colds, for example, should not be billed using CPT code 99285.

Any improper billing trends will be referred to the Office of the Inspector General for further investigation per AHCCCS.