



Health Newsflash

Top 100 Dental Procedure Codes January - June 2004



As part of the benefit management services provided by ESI Canada, this Health Newsflash contains our first dental utilization trends report, including a number of cost management recommendations for the period of January 1 to June 30, 2004. This report follows the established model of our Top 100 Therapy Classes for drug utilization and will be published annually beginning in 2005, looking at dental utilization from January to December of the previous year.

Methodology

The analysis, based on data from the attached Excel spreadsheets, has been divided into the following two categories:

1. Top 100 Dental Procedure Codes in Quebec
2. Top 100 Dental Procedure Codes in Ontario

The reasons for dividing the analysis between Quebec and Ontario dental claims are:

- Quebec dentists use a unique coding system separate from other Canadian Dental Association (CDA) provinces
- Provinces outside of Quebec use the CDA Uniform System of Coding & List of Services (USCLS)

Since CDA provinces do not all use the same procedure codes, and suggested fees also vary from province to province, our trend analysis focuses on one CDA province, Ontario.

The current dental insurance market allows for many variations in the pricing of eligible claims. This can include pricing based on various provincial fee guide years (e.g., current year, current year minus one year, etc.), by General Practitioners (GP) only, or by Specialists (e.g., Endodontist, Denturists, etc.). Due to these pricing variations, it was necessary to focus our analysis on a defined set of data. Therefore, for the purpose of the report, the data represents claims paid according to the current year GP fee guide pricing for Ontario and Quebec.

For display purposes we have listed procedure codes based on the total number of accepted claims (e.g., "# Claims Rank"). For reference purposes we also included the actual current fee guide suggested price for each listed procedure code. This allows us to illustrate dentists' billing practices relative to suggested fee guide pricing.

Since our first report only reflects six months of data (January 1 to June 30, 2004), the results may be slightly biased for groups currently allowing 9-month recall services given that some covered patients may not have claimed during this period. Our 2004 yearly report will account for the nine-month recall visits not accounted for in this report.

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Top Ten Dental Procedure Codes

The following are the top ten dental procedure codes in Ontario and Quebec based on the total number of claims accepted:

Ontario

Rank	Proc. Code	Description	% of Total Claims	% of Total Paid
1.	01202	Exam, Limited-Recall	13.15%	4.53%
2.	11112	Scaling -30 Min	8.08%	11.52%
3.	11101	Polishing -15 Min	7.82%	3.91%
4.	11107	Polishing - 7½ Min	6.92%	1.72%
5.	02142	X-rays, Bitewing-Two Films	6.77%	2.42%
6.	12101	Fluoride Treatment	6.10%	1.99%
7.	11111	Scaling -15 Min	5.66%	4.11%
8.	11117	Scaling - 7½ Min	5.33%	1.93%
9.	11113	Scaling - 45 Min	3.60%	7.71%
10.	02111	X-ray, Periapical-Single	2.54%	0.74%

Quebec

Rank	Proc. Code	Description	% of Total Claims	% of Total Paid
1.	01200	Exam, Recall	18.87%	9.87%
2.	11300	Prophylaxis, Clean & Polish	18.85%	12.78%
3.	43411	Scaling - 15 Min	8.14%	4.10%
4.	43412	Scaling - 30 Min	3.41%	3.30%
5.	23221	Restoration,Tooth Coloured	3.24%	3.19%
6.	11200	Prophylaxis, Clean & Polish	3.11%	1.48%
7.	23112	Restoration,Tooth Coloured	2.42%	2.92%
8.	23111	Restoration,Tooth Coloured	2.38%	2.40%
9.	12400	Fluoride Treatment	2.38%	0.59%
10.	23222	Restoration,Tooth Coloured	2.38%	4.10%

The total amount paid for these ten procedure codes accounted for 40.58% (Ontario) and 44.73% (Quebec) of the overall costs of the top 100 codes. These results confirm that routine preventive services (and some filling codes in Quebec) are the most utilized services claimed under private dental insurance in ESI Canada's claims database.

- Recommendation: Potential savings could be achieved if these services were modified to a nine or twelve-month cycle for adults as opposed to many existing plan designs that remain on a six-month recall cycle.

Scaling

Various procedure codes for scaling also ranked within the top 10 of both reports with cumulative paid totals of 25.27% in Ontario and 7.4% in Quebec. Many policies allow a standard limit of 8 units of scaling per year (one unit = fifteen minutes).

- Recommendation: Consider allowing a minimum number of units per year, for example 3 or 4 units, and additional units are only permitted when a letter from the treating dentist is submitted for review by the dental consultant confirming the need for additional units.





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Other Notable Procedure Codes Within the Top 100

X-rays, Periapical

ON Rank: 10 & 24

PQ Rank: 23 & 50

In Quebec, periapical x-rays (02111 and 02112) are included in the cost of a complete and recall examination, which explains why the ranking of these codes in Quebec is lower than the ranking in Ontario for the same procedure (02111).

Specific and Emergency Exams

ON Rank: 13 & 14

PQ Rank: 31 & 12

Procedure codes 01204 & 01205 (ON) and 01400 and 01300 (PQ) are the codes used for specific and emergency exams respectively. These codes are often paid under EDI without consultation or review.

- Recommendation: Consider limiting these procedure codes to once or twice per year, and where used in conjunction with cleaning, scaling, fluoride, polishing, etc. only allow benefits up to the cost of a recall exam.

Complete Exam

ON Rank: 15

PQ Rank: 17

Procedure codes 01103 (ON) and 01130 (PQ) are used for complete exams (also referred to as "new patient" exams).

- Recommendation: Consider applying a frequency restriction that limits coverage for one complete exam per patient, per dentist, but once every three years when the patient changes his/her dentist.

Restorative, Sedative Dressing

ON Rank: 41

PQ Rank: 51 & 81

Procedure codes 20111 (ON) and 20111 & 20121 (PQ) are for pain control and temporary fillings, and should not be claimed on the same day and tooth as permanent fillings and endodontic procedures.

- Recommendation: Consider limiting payment of these codes when submitted on the same day and for the same tooth as endodontic or restorative procedures.

Restorations, Tooth Coloured

Various procedure codes for tooth coloured (white) restorations appear on the reports.

- Recommendation: Many policies only pay for this type of filling on anterior (front) teeth, with the cost of amalgam (metal) fillings, a much stronger and longer-lasting material, being reimbursed on molar and bicuspid teeth (back teeth).

Periodontal Appliance

ON Rank: 57 and 78

PQ Rank: 67

Procedure codes 14611 and 14612 (ON) and 43611 (PQ) are for upper and lower periodontal appliances for bruxism, used to prevent grinding of the upper and lower teeth during sleep.

The cost for these procedures also includes insertion adjustments (ON & PQ) and post insertion adjustments for a three month period (PQ).

- Recommendation: As an administrative guideline, consider limiting benefits for maintenance and adjustments when performed within three months of insertion of the actual appliance(s).





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Gingival Curettage

ON Rank: 73

PQ Rank: 13 & 26

In Ontario procedure code 42111 is used for the treatment of periodontal (gum) disease, which includes the removal of diseased tissue. Recent studies indicate that gingival curettage offers no clinical value compared to scaling (removal of calculus from the teeth) and root planing (smoothing of roughened root surfaces) alone.

- Recommendation: Review the current number of existing plans that continue to cover gingival curettage in addition to scaling and root planing, and consider removing this procedure code as a covered service.

In Quebec, procedure codes 42000 and 42001 are for treating gingival curettage (including root planing). Since these codes include root planing, they cannot be considered equivalent to the Ontario code.

- Recommendation: Review existing plan design features and consider applying frequency limitations or dollar maximums to these procedure codes in an effort to manage costs.

Gingivectomy

ON Rank: 87

PQ Rank: 95

Procedure codes 42311 (ON) and 42010 (PQ) are used when claiming treatment for periodontal (gum) surgery and should not be claimed with recall procedures, restorations, root canal therapy or crown related services on the same day.

- Recommendation: Consider limiting payment of these codes when submitted on the same day as recall procedures, restorations, root canal therapy or crown related services.

Provider Billing Observations

Average Fee Claimed vs. Suggested Fee Guide Amount

The "% Variance of 2004 Fee" column on each report indicates that on average, dentists are charging slightly less than the suggested fee guide amounts for the reported procedure codes.

Billing Pattern of 'Range' Procedure Codes

Each fee guide includes procedure codes where the suggested fee is within a fee range.

- For example, in Ontario the fee range for a specific exam is \$28.15 to \$112.58; in Quebec the fee range for a complete oral exam (adult) is \$56 to \$91.

The reports indicate, on average, dentists are billing less than the high end of range procedure codes (Avg Fee Claimed column compared to 2004 Fee Guide column). Please note range procedure codes are flagged with a "Y" in the "Range Proc Code" column on the report.

Summary

The above analysis has identified various cost-management recommendations that if implemented will assist in reducing the overall dental plan utilization; in addition, ESI Canada will continue to monitor these trends as part of our Dental Audit Program.

Disclaimer

Application of any recommendations identified as part of this analysis may vary by customer depending on actual contract provisions and administrative practices.

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