

Dear Colleagues:

Correct processing of pathology claims relies on you as the providing, ordering and/or referring physician to document the medical need for all services rendered. On a recent audit, Noridian noted that an order or intent to order was not available for many surgical specimens. This oversight resulted in denials for several claims that otherwise could have been paid.

Both the pathologists and Noridian realize you are incredibly busy. I am sending this request on their behalf in order to facilitate proper payment to the pathologists for their essential service to you and your patients.

The simplest approach is to include a short statement in the operative note such as "Specimen(s) sent to lab for testing". This simple phrase demonstrates your intent for the pathologists to process the specimen in the usual fashion and is sufficient to suffice as an order for such services. While the ideal approach is to have your signature affixed to the requisition or a separate order in your post-operative orders, this requires additional work from you and is subject to inadvertent oversight.

For any service to be covered by Medicare, the patient's medical record must contain sufficient documentation to support the need. Your effort to include such is greatly appreciated.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule permits disclosure of protected health information without beneficiary authorization to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations. The A/B MACs perform health care operations as agents of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Providing the requested documentation is in keeping with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

These pathologists have partnered in caring for your patient(s). They will not receive payment from Medicare for the services that are ordered or referred if you do not provide information from your medical records, or in this case, an intent to order. Further, not providing this information may result in your patients having to pay for the services themselves. Noridian appreciates your cooperation in this minimal effort on behalf of your pathology partners.

Sincerely and with thanks,



Gary Oakes, M.D., FAAFP  
Contractor Medical Director  
Noridian Healthcare Services