



31 October 2024

Dr Conrad D. Mashiloane

Specialist Practice Committee (SPC)- Chairperson

Dear Dr Mashiloane,

**RE: Input for distinct procedure coding rule and additional information modifiers**

Thank you for the chance to relay SASCI's opinion regarding the above.

SASCI, the South African Society of Cardiovascular Intervention, is affiliated to the SA Heart Association. SASCI represents Cardiologists and Allied Health Care Practitioners with a special interest in cardiovascular intervention. The society, a registered not for profit entity, also acts in an advisory capacity to funders, industry, members and government on subject matters relating to interventional cardiology.

Referring to your letter, dated 8 October 2024:

**1. Distinct procedures**

SASCI acknowledge the fact that SAMA is looking into changing the "stand alone procedures" description in the MDCM (Medical Doctors Coding Manual) to "distinct procedures".

There are currently no interventional cardiology procedure descriptions and codes seen as "stand alone procedures" in the MDCM 2024. There is always the possibility that this might change in the future.

Any clinical coding description with the phrase "separate procedure", "stand-alone procedure" or "distinct procedure" will be interpreted as an all-inclusive procedure code and description. No other surgical procedure coding should be coded together with such a code as a general rule.

There are exceptions to this rule:

- a. The "distinct procedure" may be coded together with another procedure if it is performed on the same patient at a separate surgical session on the same date of service
- b. The "distinct procedure" may be coded together with another procedure if it is performed on the same patient at the same surgical session in an anatomically unrelated area
- c. This is often performed through a separate skin incision, orifice, or surgical approach
- d. Should a, b or c apply, the usage of the "distinct procedure" together with other procedure codes should not be seen as unbundling

**2. Information modifiers**

Interventional cardiology is mostly focussing on the heart. The procedure code descriptions are specific with regards to what chamber of the heart a procedure is performed on. Some interventional cardiologists perform percutaneous vascular procedures other than on coronary vessels. With this in mind, SASCI is of the opinion that:

- a. The addition of a **Bilateral modifier** to the exact same procedure being performed bilaterally, should decrease the number of motivational letters being written to funders to explain why a procedure was coded twice. The procedure will be coded once, with the bilateral modifier.

**SASCI is a Special Interest Group affiliated to SA Heart Association**

S Khan (President), J Vorster (Vice-President), D Kettles (Secretary), F Dube (Treasurer), H Weich (Ex-Officio President), C Hendrickse (PPC), A Vachiat (STEMI SA), C Zambakides, JP Theron, S Pandie, J Hitzeroth, A Mutyaba, Jess John, B Griffith and Selvan Govinsamy (ISCAP)

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- It must be reiterated that this modifier should not be used by funders to identify possible cost savings. It is two distinct procedures and should be remunerated accordingly
- b. The addition of a **Left and/or right sided modifier** should also reduce the number of motivational letters requested from funders.

### 3. Modifier 0005

The application of modifier 0005 to any percutaneous interventional cardiology (PCI), has been ill defined in the healthcare industry. Percutaneous interventional cardiology (PCI) is not seen as surgery. It is a minimally invasive procedure. The application of modifier 0005 to PCI by the funders is problematic.

SASCI would like to invite SAMA to an open discussion regarding the application of modifier 0005 to PCI to set an industry standard for PCI coding. SASCI acknowledges that multiple interventions are performed during a PCI in a very confined and limited environment e.g. a coronary vessel between 1.5mm-4.5mm.

SASCI takes pride in the fact that it has always supported fair and clinically correct standards. SASCI appreciated your consideration and do engage with the society if clarification is needed. Please contact George Nel (SASCI Executive) at [sasci@sasci.co.za](mailto:sasci@sasci.co.za) if needed.

Best regards,

Sajidah Khan  
President SASCI

Chevaan Hendrickse  
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Dr Tom Mabin  
SASCI Consultant