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Billing for new patients

It is common practice for physicians to get to know a new patient and learn of his or her health concerns and history by way of an introductory visit or what is known as a “meet and greet.”

Recent audits have revealed that these meet and greet visits are being incorrectly billed as a counselling visit (fee item 00120). Intake/history of the patient *does not* constitute counselling. An age-related office visit would be appropriate to bill for an initial visit with a new patient.

In addition, interviews to determine whether to accept a new patient into the practice should not be billed.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons guidelines on Access to Medical Care states, “It is not

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acceptable for physicians to charge patients a private fee in order to access an initial medical visit.”

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This article is the opinion of the Patterns of Practice Committee and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board. For further information contact Juanita Grant, audit and billing advisor, Physician and External Affairs, at 604 638-2829 or jgrant@doctorsofbc.ca.

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