Reviewer’s report

Title: Validation of Use of Billing Codes for Identifying Telemedicine Encounters in Administrative Data

Version: 0 Date: 30 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Feibi Zheng

Reviewer's report:

Overall, the authors have presented a clear and concise paper on the validity of using administrative CPT codes and modifiers to correctly identify telemedicine encounters within their institution. There are some minor revisions which may strengthen the paper.

- The authors refer to "charts" reviewed, it is more specific to state "encounters" reviewed. If chart is used, it implies that multiple telemedicine encounters could have been sampled from the same patient.

- Were there any exclusions in the encounters that were sampled? For example, how did you treat any potential technical failures? If the patient was unable to connect in a live telemedicine encounter, is there any possibility a billing CPT code could have still been dropped?

- Please give some additional detail in the Methods section on the telemedicine platforms that were utilized in this study. Were they consistent across departments? Again, do you have any data on the technical failure rate?

- Please provide some context with regards to telemedicine parity laws within your state. It is surprising that the telemedicine median copay was zero.

- On page 17, line 44-46, make explicit that telemedicine reimbursement during this time was limited to health care shortage areas.

- It is surprising that the median reimbursement for live telemedicine visits appears higher than that in person visits. Intuitively, it would seem that telemedicine visits would reimburse less due to downcoding due to the fewer organ systems that can be examined via telemedicine than during an in person visit. It may be interesting to see how many of these were time based coding vs HPI/ROS/PE/MDM level based coding.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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