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Welcome to the June issue of Maxim Coding Corner<sup>SM</sup>! As a leader in the HIM industry, [Maxim Health Information Services](#) is committed to providing you with updates on coding-related topics that matter to you. This month, we are focusing on coding for arthroscopic knee procedures. Read on below to learn more.

### Coding for Arthroscopic Knee Procedures

Arthroscopic knee procedures are assigned to a code from the 29871-29887 series. When coding multiple procedures for arthroscopy of the knee, you can code more than one procedure provided they are in different compartments of the knee.

#### The three compartments of the knee are:

- **MEDIAL COMPARTMENT**- the inner joint surfaces of the long bones, femur, and tibia, and the meniscus wedged between them.
- **LATERAL COMPARTMENT**-the same as the medial compartment only on the lateral side.
- **PATELLO-FEMORAL COMPARTMENT**-the joint between the undersurface of the patella and the femur.

#### Examples

- If a knee arthroscopy for removal of loose or foreign bodies (29874) is performed in a different compartment as the knee arthroscopy procedure codes 29875-29881, then code 29874 may be reported separately with modifier -59, Distinct Procedural Service, appended. For example, when abrasion arthroplasty is performed in the patello-femoral compartment along with removal of a foreign body from the lateral compartment, codes 29879 and 29874 may be reported. Modifier -59 should be appended to code 29874 to indicate that a separate compartment was involved.
- Codes 29875 and 29876 are used to report an arthroscopic synovectomy. Diseased synovium is removed with a motorized, suction, or cutting resector. Inflamed plica along the medial side of one compartment may be removed by division or excision. Code 29875 is used for a limited synovectomy. A more extensive synovectomy may require up to six portal incisions and is performed in two or more

compartments. Since code 29875 is an inclusive component of code 29876, the two codes should not be reported together. However, code 29875-59 may be reported in conjunction with another arthroscopic knee procedure if it was performed in a different compartment.

- Code 29877 is a very common arthroscopic procedure performed on the knee. This is debridement or shaving of the articular cartilage. It is often referred to as a chondroplasty. Debridement of unstable hyaline cartilage or partially fragmented cartilage is done by a motorized suction cutter. Loose bodies may also be removed. This code describes debridement of articular cartilage that is partially gone. This code should only be used once, regardless of how many compartments are debrided or shaved.
- Chondroplasty performed in the same compartment as an abrasion arthroplasty is assigned to code 29879. However, if the chondroplasty (29877) was performed in a different compartment from the abrasion arthroplasty, then codes 29879 and 29877 would be assigned. Modifier -59 should be appended to code 29877 to reflect that it was performed in a separate compartment.

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For more information, see *CPT Assist*, August 2002, Volume 11, Issue 8.

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