**Practicum Journal: Reimbursement Rates**

Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes are used to communicate to the third-party payers about healthcare services provided. CPT codes thus present an opportunity to examine if third-party payers reimburse mental health practitioners less when compared to other providers providing similar services (American Psychiatric Association, 2019). Insurance firms reimburse psychiatrists less when compared to other care providers for the same services. Even when the same codes are used to treat the same psychiatric condition, psychiatrists are still paid less. This disparity could lead to mental health practitioners not accepting insurance and also hindering access to mental healthcare services. This paper will thus analyze five reimbursement rates for various mental health conditions that I most likely will use as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP).

**Table 1:** Reimbursement Rates

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Service** | **CPT code** | **Private insurer reimbursement rate for PMHNP** | **Private insurer reimbursement rate for physicians** | **Medicare**  **The reimbursement rate for PMHNP** | **Medicare**  **The reimbursement rate for physician** |
| Psychiatric diagnostic evaluation | 90791 | $80.61 | $94.84 | $114.61 | $154.71 |
| Group psychotherapy (other than of a multiple-family group) | 90853 | $19.30 | $20.75 | $22.46 | $25.25 |
| Psychotherapy, 60 minutes with patient and/or family member | 90837 | $82.95 | $88.90 | $111.53 | $115.70 |
| Individual psychotherapy 30 minutes with patient and/or family member | 90832 | $45.75 | $53.05 | $55.96 | $51.05 |
| Psychotherapy, 45 minutes with patient and/or family member | 90834 | $63.82 | $65.50 | $74.39 | $92.76 |

The above reimbursement rate template indicates that physicians are reimbursed much higher when compared to the PMHNPs. Medicare, as well as other private insurers, have higher reimbursement rates for physicians than for PMHNPs. According to Leslie-Mazwi et al (2016) for nurse practitioners such as the PMHNPs, Medicare reimburses them 85% of the physicians’ rate. This implies that if a physician providers healthcare service Medicare rates to be $100, a nurse practitioner is likely to be reimbursed $85 for providing equivalent healthcare service. It is also clear that private insurers have higher reimbursements rates for mental practitioners when compared to Medicare. Reimbursement rates for PMHNPs differ from different states. Generally, there is a lack of clarity regarding the reimbursement rates for the PMHNPs from health insurance providers (Riley et al., 2017).

To address the issue of reimbursement rates for the PMHNPs, payers, and policy-makers should confirm mental health practitioners, including physiatrists and PMHNPs, are fairly incentivized to take part in insurance networks through comparison of reimbursement rates for comparable healthcare services and diagnoses (Barnes et al., 2017). Providing consumers and patients with the correct, user-friendly and accessible information regarding the number of mental health practitioners participating in health insurance networks, as well as the reimbursement amounts/rates can assist in improving accessibility to the mental health practitioners. This can be achieved through clarification of the options available to clients for treatment and the allied cost inferences.

References

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