

The Cardiovascular Shift to the Outpatient Setting



Kristin Truesdell; Lori Griffith

Is your organization prepared for the shift of cardiovascular procedures to the ambulatory surgical center (ASC)? If you have not had these discussions, developing a strategic plan will be crucial, as the shift has already begun.

In 2018, it was estimated that 10% of all cardiovascular (CV) procedures were performed in the ASC.¹ A current market analysis estimates a greater than 30% increase in CV volume by the mid-2020s, and some estimates are even higher with the introduction of the additional approved procedure codes. Navigating the clinical, financial, and operational considerations requires detailed knowledge of Medicare's covered procedures, patient selection criteria, and common barriers to implementation. Corazon, Inc., works diligently to stay on the leading edge of Medicare updates and other important factors influencing the shift in settings of care, and we believe it is imperative that hospitals be prepared for what is to come.

Cardiovascular Covered Procedures

The ability to perform surgical, diagnostic, and interventional procedures in the ASC is due largely to the significant advances and current innovations in technique, devices, and pharmacology, coupled with a high rate of positive outcomes and a minimal amount of major complications.² Over the last 10 years, the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has gradually recognized these clinical advances by adding cardiovascular procedures to the covered procedure list (CPL), beginning with peripheral vascular procedures. It has only been in the last 5-7 years, however, that CMS has permitted and reimbursed for device implants, diagnostic cardiac catheterizations, and low-risk percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) in the ASC setting (see Figure 1 for a list of CMS-approved CV procedures by CPT code in an ASC).

Patient Selection

Appropriate patient selection is vital for an ASC. Patient selection can have an impact on patient safety, efficiency, and ASC reportable events. Determining suitability depends on a variety of factors, such as a patient's medical history or the anticipated type of anesthesia. Other considerations include the type of ambulatory

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setting (i.e., freestanding ASC, hospital-based outpatient department, office-based lab) and social factors, such as the availability of a responsible person to care for the patient at home.

Ultimately, the decision to furnish services in the ASC setting should be based on the physician's clinical assessment of the patient's risk factors. In the final rule, CMS acknowledges the importance of making PCI payable in the ASC setting, stating that "a majority of Medicare beneficiaries may not be suitable candidates to receive these procedures in an ASC setting due to factors such as age and comorbidities."³ In a 2014 consensus statement, reiterated again in 2020, the American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association, and the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI) provided guidance for excluding patients and cardiac lesions that were inappropriate for a setting without cardiac surgery backup.^{4,5} In addition, the ASC will likely have further exclusions such as high body mass index, history of malignant hyperthermia, difficult intubation, etc. Regardless of the site of service, the expectation is that the patient will receive the same standard quality of care.

Common Barriers to Implementation

Cardiovascular care is very complex. Utilizing a multidisciplinary team to formulate a strategic plan for the merging of cardiovascular services to the ambulatory surgery arena will be imperative to anticipating and overcoming inevitable challenges. Having a proactive approach will help ensure that the organization is prepared for success.

1. Regulatory and accreditation requirements for ASCs can be quite complex. Offering cardiovascular services in an ASC is state-specific and state regulations will supersede national CMS approval. Some states require a Certificate of Need, while others are regulated by the state department of health. Third-party specialty-specific (i.e., cath lab) accreditation is required in some states and not in others. In addition, some states will require a detailed application to add a new service line. Although Medicare has approved these procedures to be performed in an ASC, Corazon recommends reviewing state

Figure 1. CY2022 CMS-Approved Cardiovascular CPT Codes in an ASC.

Peripheral Vascular	• 0238T, 0338T, 0339T, 36473-37483*, 36555-36597*, 36620, 36625, 36640, 36800, 36810, 36815, 36818-36835*, 36860, 36861, 36901-36909, 37184-37188, 37197, 37200, 37211, 37212, 37220-37249, 37607, 37609, 37765, 37766, C9764-C9767, C9772-C9775
EP Devices	• 33206-33208, 33210-33235, 33240, 33241, 33249, 33262-33264, 33270-33275, 33285, 33286
Diagnostic Cath	• 93451-93462, 93566-93568
PCI	• 92920, 92921, 92928, 92929, C9600, C9601

CY, calendar year; CMS, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid; CPT, Current Procedural Terminology; ASC, ambulatory surgical center; EP, electrophysiology; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention

*With some exclusions

Conclusion

There is no denying the existing limitations involved in shifting cardiovascular procedures to the ASC setting. However, there are many important stakeholders that are incentivized by making such a shift happen. First, patients are attracted by the ease of access, affordability, and timely and efficient process of ASC care. Subsequently, increased patient satisfaction is to be expected. Second, physicians are afforded greater control over their practice through the ease of scheduling, greater staff expertise, and improved efficiency and productivity found in an ASC setting. And third, payors are demanding high-quality, low-cost services, which ASCs are known to provide. Once these cardiovascular procedures move to the ASC, it is unlikely that these procedures will move back. How will your hospital be part of the change? ■

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EDITOR'S PICKS



The Transulnar Approach to Coronary Angiography and Intervention: Assessing the Anatomy of the Ulnar Artery Using Angiography

Nathan Kong, MD; Kiersten Rasberry; Daniel Gold, MD, et al

The transulnar approach (TUA) has been proposed as a safe alternative to the more established transradial approach (TRA) for cardiac catheterization. However, no study has assessed the anatomy and variability of the ulnar artery using angiography. A retrospective analysis of patients who underwent transradial cardiac catheterization during routine clinical care was conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative measurements of artery diameter were collected.

J Invasive Cardiol. 2022 Feb 18 (Ahead of Issue). • invasivecardiology.com



Comparison of Invasive and Medical Treatment in Patients With Isolated Non-Ostial Side-Branch Stable Coronary Artery Disease

Sukru Arslan, MD; Omer Dogan, MD; Tugay Yumuk, MD, et al

It is unknown if simple percutaneous intervention is more beneficial than medical therapy in patients with isolated side-branch (SB) disease. Therefore, we aimed to compare the effect of invasive and medical treatment strategies on long-term adverse outcomes in patients with isolated non-ostial SB stable coronary artery disease (CAD). A total of 176 patients diagnosed with isolated non-ostial SB stable CAD by coronary angiography were included in this study.

Vasc Dis Mgmt. 2020 Feb;19(2):E34-E38 • vasculardiseasemanagement.com