

**To:**

Healthcare providers
Medical schemes
Administrators

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 Date: 09 June 2009

Circular 12 of 2009**Clarifying the use of modifier code 0019**

The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) has noted with concern an increasing number of complaints pertaining to the modifier code 0019.

This Circular intends to clarify the appropriate use of this code in order to curb the inappropriate use and/or abuse of the code by healthcare providers.

Reference is made to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) Ethical Tariff for Medical Practitioners in the table below. Please note that this tariff has been discontinued as of May 2009.

Doctors Billing Manual (DBM) / South African Medical Association (SAMA)	
Modifier 0019	<p>(a) Surgery on neonates (aged up to and including 28 days after birth) and low birth weight infants (weighing less than 2 500g) under general anaesthesia (excluding circumcision): per fee for procedure + 50% for surgeons and a 50% increase in anaesthetic time units for anaesthesiologists</p> <p>(b) Neonates requiring intensive care: per fee for the intensive care items (section 4.7.2) + 50% for neonatologists and/or paediatricians</p>
National Health Reference Price List (NHRPL)	
Modifier 0019	Surgery on neonates (aged up to and including 28 days after birth) and low birth weight infants (weighing less than 2 500g) under general anaesthesia (excluding circumcision): per fee for procedure + 50% for surgeons and a 50% increase in anaesthetic time units for anaesthesiologists
Health Professions Council Ethical Tariff for Medical Practitioners (HPCMP)	
Modifier 0019	Surgery on neonates (aged up to and including 28 days after birth) and low birth weight infants (weighing less than 2 500g) under general anaesthesia (excluding circumcision): per fee for procedure + 50% for surgeons and a 50% increase in anaesthetic time units for anaesthesiologists

A statutory body established in terms of the
 Medical Schemes Act, 1998 (Act 131 of 1998)

Chairperson: Prof. W Pick Acting Registrar & CEO: P Matshidze



As indicated in point (a) under DBM in the table above, neonatologists and/or paediatricians may apply modifier 0019 in respect of neonates, defined as new-born babies up to and including 28 days old, and infants with a low birth weight, where low birth weight is defined as less than 2.5kg (2 500g) when surgery is performed under general anaesthesia.

Point (b), which follows directly after point (a) in the same cell, reads “neonates requiring intensive care: per fee for intensive care items (section 4.7.2) + 50%”. The interpretation of point (b) by different neonatologists and/or paediatricians necessitated the drafting of this Circular.

The Compensation Commission had in no uncertain terms ruled that the South African Medical Association (SAMA), as a group, is not permitted to publish recommended fees for services. To arrive at an equitable charge, SAMA relies on the National Health Reference Price List (NHRPL) scale, the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) scale of fees (applicable to Compensation Commissioner cases only) and the Health Professions Council Ethical Tariff for Medical Practitioners (HPCMP) scale of fees to compile its DBM, a practice tool for medical practitioners.

The NHRPL tariff only makes provision for modifier 0019 to be charged in the case of surgery under general anaesthesia. So does the HPCMP scale of fees, which is the only other rate medical practitioners could have charged ethically up to May 2009.

In light of the above, the Office of the Registrar is of the view that modifier 0019 may only be charged for treating a neonate or infant with a low birth weight following a surgical procedure performed under general anaesthesia (excluding circumcision).

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