

Medicare Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) for Advanced Imaging

WHO: Applies to all Medicare Part B patients requiring advanced imaging

WHAT: All providers will be required to obtain an AUC consult prior to ordering advanced diagnostic imaging services including: CT, MRI, Nuclear Medicine and PET. The AUC consult can be done through a CMS qualified clinical decision support mechanism (CDSM). The AUC consult must be documented *prior* to ordering the imaging study.

PURPOSE: The AUC program is to enable providers to order the most appropriate test for your patient. CMS will use data collected from the program to identify outlier ordering professionals who will become subject to prior authorization.

WHEN: Effective immediately, the education period began January 1, 2021. Beginning January 1, 2022 claims for imaging without a documented AUC consult will be *denied*.

ACTION Register for CareSelect Open Access portal a FREE CMS qualified CDSM provider

<https://openaccess.careselect.org/registration>

There are several other CDSM mechanisms available. See the CMS website for a complete list.

DETAILS: It is important to note that the law does not mandate ordering providers to strictly adhere to the AUC, just consult AUC. Unlike prior authorization, there is no “hard stop” to the ordering process. For complete details click below.

<https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/Downloads/AUCDiagnosticImaging-909377.pdf>



Information for Ordering Professionals

To reduce the burden on Ordering Professionals (OP), CMS has clarified the personnel who can consult AUC at the time of order. This year's rule formalizes the option for clinical staff, operating under the direct supervision of the OP to perform the consultation. Consultation must take place at the point of order and under the direction of the OP.

As the physician requesting the order is subject to outlier calculation, any workflows leveraging this option must ensure that the ordering physician is made aware of non-adherent requests at the point-of-order. This confirms the legislation's focus on utilization management and emphasizes the educational impact of interactive AUC review when making care decisions.

Radiologists cannot consult. The statute distinguishes between ordering and furnishing professionals and indicates that OPs may have their staff, but not radiology staff, consult AUC on their behalf.



For 2021, CMS will not require the AUC consultation code on advanced imaging orders or require the AUC consultation code on Medicare claims. **However, starting January 2022, an AUC consultation must take place at the time of the order for imaging services that will be furnished in one of the designated settings and paid for under one of the designated payment systems that include the physician fee schedule, outpatient prospective payment system, and ambulatory surgical center payment system.**