Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail a proposal for a new HCPCS powered wheelchair coding structure. The Power Mobility Coding Task Force, comprised of power wheelchair suppliers and manufacturers developed this coding proposal as an alternative to the existing HCPCS power wheelchair codes. The work began under the auspices of AAHomecare. The group spent two years developing this proposal and receiving input from the clinical community and other rehab and non-rehab suppliers not on the task force. This proposal was submitted to CMS initially in 2003 and then again through the National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology (NCART) which is where this coding effort and the task force is now organized.

Intent of the Code Proposal

The HCPCS codes for power wheelchairs currently consists of four codes (K0010, K0011, K0012 and K0014), each of which neither defines the clinical requirements of current power wheelchair consumer nor appropriately characterizes existing powered wheelchair technology. As a result, dilution of the codes original definition has occurred and products designed for very different intents and applications are being categorized in exactly the same manner, regardless of differing technologies designed to meet different consumer needs. The intent of this proposal is to establish a power wheelchair code structure that adequately delineates among real consumer requirements and is ultimately reflected in real and relevant technology differences.

Scope

The scope of this document covers all powered wheelchairs, including the base, seat, drive electronics, armrests and footrests. The document does not currently cover pediatric powered mobility devices. The proposed codes have been designed to interface with the accessory codes recently approved by CMS and implemented in January 2004. The coding structure has also been designed such that pediatric codes would fit into the structure at a future time.

Rationale

There are two equally relevant methods for categorizing powered wheelchairs. The first deals with the clinical presentation of the patient characterized by diagnosis, prognosis and symptomotology. The second is to delineate the specific differences among existing technologies to create appropriate coding categories. The most relevant coding strategy includes creating code descriptors and definitions that intersect both clinical requirements and technical specifications for the widest variety of patient diagnosis, prognosis and symptomotology.

The process of developing the codes proposed in this document involved a careful examination of the clinical needs of patients who require powered wheelchairs along with a comprehensive survey of current powered wheelchair technologies.

This document proposes seven new powered wheelchair “E” codes (designated E1 – E7 for purposes of this proposal) and the elimination of the current power wheelchair “K” codes. This is not a hierarchical coding structure. The patient who requires a power wheelchair included in the E2 code, for example, would not derive additional clinical benefits from the features provided by products included in the E3, E4, E5 or E6 code. The underlying premise of this coding proposal is to provide the patient with the most cost-effective powered wheelchair that meets both his or her current and long-term needs. In order to meet the needs of all patient populations we will

require a code to upgrade the weight capacity of E2, E3, E4 and E5 to accommodate patient weights of 251 to 399 pounds.

The following section is a general overview of the proposed coding scheme. The details of product definition and clinical indicators are included later in this document.

- **E1 - Non-modular powered wheelchair**
    - Describes a traditional powered wheelchair with a fixed or folding, tubular design frame. This code describes a wheelchair that is appropriate for a patient who requires powered mobility but does not require any specialized seating other than possibly a cushion for support and pressure reduction. In addition, the patient's anatomical requirements can be met by the limited configuration of the products within this code.
- **E2 –General Purpose Modular Powered Wheelchair**
    - *NOTE: The "modular" designation describes a powered wheelchair design that includes a base unit containing the motors and batteries and a separate section that includes the seat/back and in codes E3, E4, E5 and E6 also includes other postural positioning components*.
    - The General Purpose Powered Modular Wheelchair code includes products that are designed to meet the needs of individuals who require powered mobility and also have single-plane, fixed orthopedic deformities that require posterior support. These powered wheelchairs accommodate for these deformities by allowing for a range of seat-to-back angle settings. These chairs also allow a seating surface to floor height that can be set to meet the patient's specific functional needs, e.g., facilitating transfers, appropriate positioning relative to surfaces such as tables or sinks, etc. as well as allowing for proper positioning of the lower extremities.
- **E3 –Positioning Modular Powered Wheelchair**
    - This code includes powered wheelchairs that provide all the capabilities described in the E2 code and add the following features as well:
    - More aggressive postural seating support allowing the mounting of secondary positioning components to meet patient's physiologic and functional needs, including any of the following: lateral thoracic supports; lateral hips supports, medial thigh supports (abduction wedge); adjustable head supports; seats and backs fabricated to patient measurement; anterior thoracic supports; anterior knee supports, etc.
    - Meeting the needs of the patient who cannot, due to diagnosis or symptomotology, operate a powered wheelchair using a traditional joystick control interface by accommodating, as needed, alternative means of controlling the movements of the powered wheelchair.

- Accommodates the patient who is unable to perform independent weight shifts, or for whom a cushion alone does not provide adequate pressure reduction/distribution by accommodating either a power tilt or power recline seating function.

- The adaptability of the chairs included in this code allow a proactive approach to providing equipment that meet the patient's current needs yet allow for changes in both electronic and powered seating options as the patient's condition dictates over time.

- **E4 –Multi-function Positioning Modular Powered Wheelchair**

  - This code includes powered wheelchairs that provide all the capabilities and adaptability described in the E3 code and adds the following features as well:

  - Accommodate more complex pressure distribution/reduction and positioning needs by allow at least two power seating function, e.g., power tilt and power recline. In order to accommodate multiple power seating functions, the powered wheelchairs included in this code represent a distinctly different technology that incorporates structural and other design changes that enhance stability and performance to meet these added demands.

  - The chairs included in this code also accommodate the needs of a client who requires ventilator and/or other respiratory technology by providing appropriate on-chair mounting of this equipment.

  - As in the E3 code, the adaptability of the chairs included in this code allow a proactive approach to providing equipment that meet the patient's current needs yet allow for changes in both electronic and powered seating options as the patient's condition dictates over time.

- **E5 –Active Performance Modular Powered Wheelchair**

  - The powered wheelchairs represented in this code contain most of the features in the E3 and E4 codes but incorporate specific design and technology characteristics that allow for significant increases in the functional capability of the wheelchair, including: added speed; enhanced negotiation of uneven and rough terrain; increased incline climbing performance and obstacle climbing, e.g., higher door sills, etc.

  - This category of products is important for students or patients that are employed or otherwise have daily roles or responsibilities that require the ability to get from place to place in a given timeframe, require frequent movement for long periods of time during the day requiring larger battery capacity, or whose activities or geography present environmental issues that require the ability to handle steep inclines or uneven terrain. This can also be patients that are continuing to care for young families, older

parents or are otherwise active in their communities.

- **E6 – Heavyweight Capacity Powered Wheelchair**
  - The powered wheelchairs included in this code include many of the features described in E1 but are specifically designed to accommodate up to 500 pounds. This weight requirement is not available as add-on or adaptation of the chairs included in the previous codes. To accommodate the additional weight capacity these chairs are manufactured to incorporate specific parameters in structural, electronic and motor design.
- **E7 – Not otherwise Classified Powered Wheelchair**
  - This code is intended to provide access for the patient to powered wheelchairs that are not included by design parameters or clinical and functional capabilities in codes E1 – E6. The chairs in this code are the "outliers" – the lower utilization products that are critical to the patient who has special needs that require specific capabilities not found in technology represented by codes E1-E6. This is also where products designed to accommodate patient's over 500 pounds would be classified. Also, pediatric power wheelchairs may be classified in this category until pediatric power wheelchair codes are approved.

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