

**TITLE:** Crediting “Alert & Oriented X 3” for Evaluation and Management Physical Examination

**POLICY/PURPOSE:**

To ensure that the physical examination notation “Alert and Oriented to Time Place and Person,” often abbreviated “A&O X 3,” is properly credited when coding or auditing an Evaluation and Management Service (E/M).

**DEFINITIONS:**

**PROCEDURE:**

1. 1997 Guidelines

A. General Multi-System Examination

“Alert and Oriented to Time Place and Person,” often abbreviated “A&O X 3,” is a defined bullet under the psychiatric system of the 1997 general multi-system exam. As such, it should be credited as an element of the psychiatric system.

B. Neurological Single System Examination

This same notation is listed under the neurological system when a neurological single system exam is performed under the 1997 E/M guidelines. As such, it should be credited as an element of the neurological system exam when the 1997 neurological single system exam is utilized.

C. Other Single System Examinations

This notation is credited to the neurological/psychiatric system for the following 1997 single system exams: Cardiovascular; Ear, Nose and Throat; Eyes, Genitourinary, Hematologic/Lymphatic/Immunologic, Musculoskeletal, Respiratory, and Skin. As such, it should be credited as an element of the neurological/psychiatric system exam when the above referenced 1997 single system exams are utilized.

2. 1995 Guidelines

As far as the 1995 E/M physical examination guidelines are concerned, there are no defined, bulleted elements that must be satisfied like there are for the 1997 guidelines. As such, the notation “Alert and Oriented to Time Place and Person” or “A&O X 3” may be credited to either the psychiatric organ system or the neurological organ system.

**REFERENCES:**

CMS. 1995 Documentation Guidelines for Evaluation and Management Services.

CMS. 1997 Documentation Guidelines for Evaluation and Management Services.

**APPROVED BY:** Maryann C. Palmeto  
Director, Office of Physician Billing Compliance