The preoperative evaluation:
Medical necessity or unnecessary expense? *

Andrew T Taylor, MD

Duplicate history and physical preoperative examinations, one performed under the direction of the surgeon and the second under the direction of anesthesiologist are too common. Some physical exams are even limited to automated temperature, heart rate and blood pressure measurements combined with auscultation of the heart and lungs through the patient’s shirt or blouse.

Costs can be substantially reduced by having only one careful history and physical examination and costs can be further reduced by eliminating pro forma physical examinations – superficial examinations that provide no meaningful clinical information.

Preoperative care should be thoughtful, conscientious, and based on clinical indications- not tradition, inertia, an unfocused desire to acquire as much information as possible, or maximization of revenue at the patient’s or taxpayer’s expense.

*Surgery 2014:155;575-577