

From Jim Mold, MD, CAQG

In my geriatric clinic, we screen for cognitive impairment in two steps:

1. On the initial visit and at annual exams, the nurse administers the Short Blessed Test (SBT; also called the Blessed Orientation Memory Test or BOMT). It only measures short term memory and orientation, but that is all we are interested in at this first step. The advantage of this test over the Mini-Mental Status Exam (MMSE) is that it only takes 1-2 minutes instead of 5-7. The disadvantage is that some drug companies and drug monitoring companies want the MMSE score.
2. For those who screen even weakly positive (SBT score ≥ 8), we do a Cognistat (Neurobehavioral Cognitive Status Exam). This takes from 15 – 45 minutes to administer depending upon the level of cognitive impairment. The nurse can do it once she is trained. (We can train her.) If it is administered on a different day than your office visit, you can charge for this test using a diagnosis like dementia or cognitive impairment or memory loss using the CPT code 96116. The Medicare allowable is \$99.96.
3. To order Cognistat test materials, you have to write to The Northern California Neurobehavioral Group, Inc., P.O. Box 460, Fairfax, CA 94978 or you can call them at 1-800-922-5840. Once you have the materials, contact me and we will set up a time to train your nurse. Then you may want to fax me the (de-identified) test results on a few patients so that I can teach you how to interpret them.

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