

Dermatology Coding Alert

Reader Question: Assess Risk on a Regular Basis

Question: We are having a bit of a debate in our practice. Some of us think that performing a risk assessment once every few years is adequate, but others believe that we should do them more often. How often should our practice perform a risk assessment?

Indiana Subscriber

Answer: The answer is not the same for every organization and every situation. You should generally "take a good scan around and make sure you've covered all your bases at least once every couple of years," says **Jim Sheldon-Dean**, founder and director of compliance services for Lewis Creek Systems, LLC, based in Charlotte, VT.

If nothing much in your practice is changing and you're continuing to do business the way you always have been, performing a comprehensive risk assessment every couple of years is sufficient.

Caveat: But if you know you're making a change — for example, if you're installing some new systems or changing how you're doing business — you need to perform a risk assessment to pinpoint any risks and determine whether the change alters any of your risk profiles, Sheldon-Dean stresses.

Another exception to keep in mind is meaningful use funding, Sheldon-Dean points out. If you're getting federal money for your electronic health record (EHR) system, you'll need to update on an annual basis — so you'll need to perform a risk assessment on a yearly basis as well.