

## Internal Medicine Coding Alert

### Clip-and-Save Quick Tips: Understand When Diagnostic FOBT Codes Apply

#### You've got more ICD-9 choices than you may think

Now that you've got the rules for reporting screening tests locked in, you should learn what coding a diagnostic fecal occult blood test (FOBT) is all about. The key is knowing how to justify diagnostic code 82270 (Blood, occult, by peroxidase activity [e.g., guaiac], qualitative; feces, 1-3 simultaneous determinations) to Medicare payers.

**How we can help:** Use these CMS-approved conditions and symptoms that warrant an internist ordering a diagnostic FOBT.

**1. The patient must have a known or suspected digestive tract condition that might cause intestinal bleeding.** For example, the internist provides a stool-collection kit to a patient who has irritable bowel syndrome (564.1). When the patient returns the samples, you may bill diagnostic FOBT code 82270, says **Cathy Satkus**, a professional coder for Harvard Family Physicians, an internal medicine and family practice facility in Tulsa, Okla.

**2. Your patient has unexpected anemia.** In these cases, you should select the appropriate anemia ICD-9 codes (280.0-280.9).

**3. The internist finds conditions related to blood loss.** You can expect such a finding when the patient presents to the office with abdominal pain in the right upper quadrant (789.01), for instance.

**4. A patient complains of black or red-tinged stools.** A Medicare-approved diagnosis code for this condition includes 787.7 (Abnormal feces).

For more on diagnostic FOBTs, go online to [www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewncd.asp?ncd\\_id=190.34&ncd\\_version=1&show=all](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewncd.asp?ncd_id=190.34&ncd_version=1&show=all).