

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

ICD-10: Neck Pain: From 723.1 to M54.2

Good news: Official descriptor remains same.

Internal medicine physicians often see patients who complain of neck pain. It's a simple condition to code under ICD-9 with 723.1 (Cervicalgia).

Your choice will remain easy when ICD-10 goes into effect in October 2014, because you'll simply switch to M54.2 (Cervicalgia). Diagnosis M54.2 falls under the category "Other Dorsopathies; Dorsalgia." Note that M54.2 does not apply to cervicalgia due to intervertebral cervical disc disorder. For those situations, ICD-10 directs you to the M50 (Cervical disc disorders) code family.

Coding tip: Don't fall into the trap of reporting neck pain (or pain in any of the spinal regions) with one of the joint pain codes from ICD-9. Coding options in that group pinpoint joint pain in the shoulder region (719.41), upper arm (719.42), pelvic region and thigh (719.45), and other anatomic regions. A "pain in joint" choice, however, isn't as accurate for neck pain as 723.1.

Document it: The biggest factor in correctly coding neck pain is knowing the anatomic site. Ensure that your providers always specify the site, so you can report a detailed code whenever possible.