

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

READER QUESTION ~ Fake Complaint Requires Real Diagnosis Code

Question: Our internist saw a patient who complained of migraine pain. After examining the patient, our physician believed the patient was trying to get a pain medication prescription. Which diagnosis should I report?

New York Subscriber

Answer: Coding experts offer many suggestions for a diagnosis in this case, including V65.5 (Person with feared complaint in whom no diagnosis was made), 784.0 (Headache) or 346.9x (Migraine, unspecified) (if the physician actually diagnosed a headache or migraine).

If your internist truly believes the patient is faking the illness to obtain medication, go for the hard-hitting diagnosis: V65.2 (Person feigning illness). You should ask the physician which diagnosis to use if the documentation doesn't make it clear.

The insurer may not pay for the visit because there was no condition that the physician actually treated. You should inform the patient that she might be financially liable for the visit if the insurer considers it a noncovered service.

Document it: If your physician is concerned that the patient is seeking drugs, he should note this in the patient's chart for future reference.