Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Reader Questions: ICD-9 Code Choice Depends on Apnea's Cause

Question: The internist performs a level-two E/M on a new patient. The medical record indicates that the patient had obstructive sleep apnea caused by excess weight. Should I use ICD-9 code 780.51 to represent this condition?

Minnesota Subscriber

Answer: Code 780.51 (Insomnia with sleep apnea, unspecified) is not specific enough for your scenario. Use 780.51 when the physician cannot (or has not yet been able to) determine the cause of the condition.

Because the internist noted that excess weight caused the apnea, you should instead choose 327.23 (Obstructive sleep apnea [adult] [pediatric]).

Report 99202 (Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of a new patient, which requires these three key components: an expanded problem-focused history; an expanded problem-focused examination; straightforward medical decision-making) and 327.23. Also, include 278.01 (Morbid obesity) as a secondary diagnosis to represent the cause of the patient's obstructive sleep apnea.