

## Internal Medicine Coding Alert

### You Be the Coder: Patient Wheezing? 519.11 Might Outweigh 786.07

Question: Sometimes our internist suggests diagnosis 519.11 for wheezing, but sometimes he suggests 786.07. How can I tell which one to use?

Florida Subscriber

Answer: The best code for "wheezing" or what allergists call "wheezing associated respiratory illness" (WARI) is diagnosis code 519.11 (Acute bronchospasm). Although the descriptor for 786.07 is "wheezing," the code refers to stenosis (or narrowing) of respiratory passages. Code 519.11 is more specific for bronchospasm.

Physicians might use the diagnosis of WARI for patients who experience wheezing but don't meet the criteria for an asthma diagnosis. For example, a child with an upper respiratory infection (URI) has his first episode of associated wheezing and requires treatment of bronchospasm. This would typically not warrant labeling a child with "asthma," using ICD-9 code 493.02 (Extrinsic asthma; with [acute] exacerbation).