

Neurosurgery Coding Alert

ICD-10 Coding: Name And Number Are Key To Coding For Cranial Nerve Neoplasms

You will find specific codes for only the olfactory, optic, and acoustic cranial nerves.

You won't find one single rule to coding for malignant neoplasms in cranial nerves. The reason is that for 12 cranial nerves, you don't have a corresponding code for each nerve ☐ nor do you have a code encompassing all of them.

When you submit claims for malignant neoplasms in the cranial nerve(s), you can navigate to the right code by adopting the following 3 steps:

1. Identify which cranial nerve is involved.
2. Look if there is a dedicated code for the cranial nerve involved.
3. Check if you can be specific for right or left side involvement.

Identify the Cranial Nerve

When your physician documents the diagnosis of neoplasm in a cranial nerve, you should read the clinical record in detail and try to find out which cranial nerve was involved. Your physician may document the involved cranial nerve in either number or nomenclature. Refer to Table 1 below for details of name and number of cranial nerves.



Spot the Specific Codes

ICD-10 has specific codes for neoplasms only in the cranial nerves I, II, and VIII, i.e. the olfactory, optic, and acoustic cranial nerves. The three code series for these cranial nerves are: C72.2 (Malignant neoplasm of olfactory nerve), C72.3 (Malignant neoplasm of optic nerve), and C72.4 (Malignant neoplasm of acoustic nerve).

Find the fifth character: For malignant neoplasms in the olfactory, optic, and acoustic cranial nerves, you should describe the fifth character depending upon the laterality of the neoplasm. Table 2 lists the codes for the right and left sided involvement of these cranial nerves. In addition, you have specific codes which you can submit when your physician does not specify the laterality of the neoplasm.



"Malignant neoplasms of cranial nerves are quite uncommon. Consequently, there was likely no incentive to develop specific codes for a malignant neoplasm of each cranial nerve," says **Gregory Przybylski, MD**, director of neurosurgery at the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute, JFK Medical Center in Edison.

Code for Other Cranial Nerves

Your claims are not limited to only olfactory, optic, and acoustic cranial nerves. When your physician documents neoplasm in a cranial nerve other than these three nerves, you can prepare a claim with code C72.59 (Malignant neoplasm of other cranial nerves).

Don't have a name or number for cranial nerve? When your physician does not document the name or number of the cranial nerve involved with the neoplasm, you submit ICD-10 code C72.50 (Malignant neoplasm of unspecified cranial

nerve).

More: The National Cancer Institute has described the functions of the cranial nerves and provided examples of tumors that can arise in these nerves. You can read more at: <https://training.seer.cancer.gov/brain/tumors/anatomy/nerves.html>.