

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

ICD-10: Make the Most of the ICD-10 Extension With These Quick Tips

New implementation date is set for Oct. 1, 2015, so be ready.

Whether you're cheering about the extra time you'll have to prepare for ICD-10 or you're devastated that you've invested time and money into a system that keeps getting pushed back, you can make the most of the extra time you now have to prepare for the upcoming diagnosis coding system.

Background: Congress piggybacked an ICD-10 extension into legislation that reversed the 24 percent cut that you were supposed to face on April 1. Although practices are pleased to have their 24 percent Medicare boost enacted, many physicians are growing weary of the repeated attempts to move the ICD-10 implementation date further down the road.

In early May, Medicare posted a message on its website that "the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services expects to release an interim final rule in the near future that will include a new compliance date that would require the use of ICD-10 beginning Oct. 1, 2015. The rule will also require HIPAA covered entities to continue to use ICD-9-CM through Sept. 30, 2015."

Practices should continue to check in on the CMS website (www.cms.gov/icd10) throughout the year to get new tips on the ICD-10 program and how it will be implemented.

In addition, the following tips can help you maximize the additional time you'll have before ICD-10 is implemented.

Keep the Momentum Going

If you've got an ICD-10 training and implementation plan in place, don't scrap it now. Instead, just increase the detail in your training program so your staff is even more thoroughly prepared for the system before it goes into effect.

"The changes are in the implementation date, not that it is not coming at all, so prepare on," advises **Laureen Jandroep, CPC, CPC-I, CMSCS, CHCI**, senior instructor at CodingCertification.org in Oceanville, N.J. That preparation should continue to involve your whole staff, and not just your coders.

"Of note, we should not throw away the chance to improve the physician's clinical documentation just because the code set implementation has been delayed," says **Barbara J. Cobuzzi, MBA, CENTC, CPC-H, CPC-P, CPC-I, CHCC**, president of CRN Healthcare Solutions, a consulting firm in Tinton Falls, N.J. "It is always a goal to improve clinical documentation."

Work With Vendors

If you've already set up your systems to change over to ICD-10 on Oct. 1, you should talk to your vendors to delay that process. For example, some practices have created new superbills and planned to have them printed in mid-September. You can call off that process for now. In addition, if your EMR or other software vendor has already configured your systems to automatically switch to ICD-10 codes on Oct. 1, ask them to change that date. Since we don't yet know the exact new ICD-10 implementation date, you can let the vendor know that you're going to keep the switchover date open-ended until you have more information.