

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### ICD-10: Watch H54 Family for Streamlined Visual Impairment Coding

#### ICD-10 simplifies code set to 17 codes from 45 in ICD-9.

While the enormity of making the transition to ICD-10 can seem overwhelming, the new system makes coding many conditions easier and more specific. Case in point: In ICD-10, you have to choose from only 17 codes for blindness and low vision, compared to the 45 codes you used to have in this ICD-9 category.

Prior to October 1, 2015, you turned to 369.xx (Blindness and low vision) when your patient is diagnosed with a visual impairment. Now, you should be looking to H54.-- (Blindness and low vision). The codes in the H54.-- category break down as follows:

- H54.0 □ Blindness, both eyes
- H54.10 □ Blindness, one eye, low vision other eye, unspecified eyes
- H54.11 □ Blindness, right eye, low vision left eye
- H54.12 □ Blindness, left eye, low vision right eye
- H54.3 □ Unqualified visual loss, both eyes
- H54.40 □ Blindness, one eye, unspecified eye
- H54.41 □ Blindness, right eye, normal vision left eye
- H54.42 □ Blindness, left eye, normal vision right eye
- H54.50 □ Low vision, one eye, unspecified eye
- H54.51 □ Low vision, right eye, normal vision left eye
- H54.52 □ Low vision, left eye, normal vision right eye
- H54.60 □ Unqualified visual loss, one eye, unspecified
- H54.61 □ Unqualified visual loss, right eye, normal vision left eye
- H54.62 □ Unqualified visual loss, left eye, normal vision right eye
- H54.7 □ Unspecified visual loss
- H54.8 □ Legal blindness, as defined in USA.

#### Compare the Coding Systems

To get a better idea of how ICD-10 approaches coding for visual impairment, let's compare the codes for blindness in ICD-9 with those in ICD-10.

For a patient with blindness in both eyes, you used to select either 369.4 (Legal blindness, as defined in the USA [includes Blindness NOS according to the USA definition]) or 369.01 (Better eye: total vision impairment; lesser eye: total vision impairment) in ICD-9, depending on the documentation.

In ICD-10, your code would be H54.8 (Legal blindness, as defined in USA).

**Another difference:** The 369.0x (Profound vision impairment both eyes) subcategory included nine codes broken out by the level of impairment in each eye. While in ICD-10, the H54.1- (Blindness, one eye, low vision other eye) subcategory breaks out blindness and low vision into just three choices depending on which eye has the blindness.

#### Don't Miss New Sequencing Rules

When reporting that your patient has a visual impairment, you should also list a code that describes the reason for the vision problem. In ICD-9, you had no instruction that says one condition has to be coded before the other, but in ICD-10, you're asked to sequence any associated underlying cause of blindness before the H54.-- code.

**Note:** Visual acuity with best possible correction means with glasses with best possible correction.