

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### ICD-9 2006 Update: Describe Specifics With New NPDR Dx Codes

#### Get used to these codes fast - you'll need to start using them in October

Optometry coders have long wished for a more specific way to code the severity of nonproliferative diabetic retinopathy (NPDR). On Oct. 1 of this year, you will get your wish with five new ICD-9 codes in the 362.0 series.

The new codes, which were published in a proposed rule in the May 4, 2005, Federal Register, are:

1. 362.03 - Nonproliferative diabetic retinopathy NOS
2. 362.04 - Mild nonproliferative diabetic retinopathy
3. 362.05 - Moderate nonproliferative diabetic retinopathy
4. 362.06 - Severe nonproliferative diabetic retinopathy
5. 362.07 - Diabetic macular edema.

These codes join 362.01 (Background diabetic retinopathy) and 362.02 (Proliferative diabetic retinopathy) in the 362.0 series. ICD-9 2005 now specifies that 362.01 includes diabetic macular edema (DME), which will presumably change when 362.07 goes into effect.

The new codes are a result of ophthalmic industry input during the October 2004 ICD-9 CM Coordination and Maintenance Committee Meeting. **Matthew J. Sheetz, MD, PhD**, representing Eli Lilly, argued for the new codes and for other ICD-9 revisions, saying that "background diabetic retinopathy," represented by ICD-9 code 362.01, is an "older term that does not represent current AAO [American Academy of Ophthalmology] language."

And, 362.01 "does not allow for clear understanding of disease progression," Sheetz said in his presentation to the committee. "Modification of current codes will better represent the clinical presentation of DR and DME."

#### Use Dilated Findings to Determine Code

So when should you code mild, as opposed to moderate or severe, diabetic retinopathy? Sheetz noted the AAO's "International Clinical Diabetes Disease Severity Scale," which distinguishes the different stages of the disease, based on your dilated ophthalmoscopy findings in chart at right.

Chart Source: "Preferred Practice Pattern: Diabetic Retinopathy," American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2003.

**Key:** These codes take effect on Oct. 1, 2005, says **Sue Wilson**, billing specialist for Miller Vision in Ironwood, Mich. Remember that you no longer have a grace period to begin using new ICD-9 codes, so be ready to integrate these codes into your practice on Oct. 1, she says.

**Note:** To see the complete list of new codes, you can download the proposed rule from <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providerupdate/regs/cms1500p.pdf>.

