

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Diagnosis Coding: CMS Proposes One-Year Delay for ICD-10

Don't count on the delay quite yet, coding expert warns.

Part B practices have been wondering how to make contingency plans ever since HHS Secretary **Kathleen Sebelius** announced on Feb. 16 that the government would be delaying the deadline for ICD-10 diagnosis coding, but failed to designate a new implementation date.

Now CMS has nailed down its proposed new deadline: Oct. 1, 2014. That's one year later than the October 2013 date currently in effect. CMS announced the proposal on April 9 as part of a rule that also includes other HIPAA-related provisions.

"Many provider groups have expressed serious concerns about their ability to meet the Oct. 1, 2013, compliance date," CMS says in a release. "The proposed change in the compliance date for ICD-10 would give providers and other covered entities more time to prepare and fully test their systems to ensure a smooth and coordinated transition to these new code sets."

Provider Community Offers Mixed Reviews

Some practices are breathing a sigh of relief that they have an extra year to switch to ICD-10. But others say that they are frustrated that their intensive ICD-10 preparation is getting stalled at this late date.

The American Medical Association, which was a vocal proponent of an ICD-10 implementation delay, cheered the news. "The American Medical Association and physicians across the nation appreciate that CMS has proposed delaying the ICD-10 implementation date to October 1, 2014," said **Peter W. Carmel, MD**, the AMA's president. "The postponement is the first of many steps that regulators need to take to reduce the number of costly, time-consuming regulatory burdens that physicians are shouldering."

Don't write the new ICD-10 deadline in pen quite yet, though. "ICD-10-CM is NOT delayed until October 1, 2014," coding expert **Lisa Selman-Holman** notes on her blog. The new deadline is merely a proposal. "The healthcare industry has the opportunity to comment on the proposal and THEN CMS can publish a final rule," notes Selman-Holman with Selman-Holman & Associates and CoDR -- Coding Done Right.

The billions this delay is expected to cost providers may stymie the delay. "Only time will tell," Selman-Holman says.

You have 30 days to comment on the CMS proposal, which can be viewed in the Federal Register at http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2012-08718_PI.pdf. To submit your comments, visit www.regulations.gov and refer to "CMS-0040-P."