

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

NEUROSURGERY: 2 Scenarios Show Effective B Code Use For Neurosurgery Aftercare

Explore your options to indicate follow-up exams

Don't be surprised when you see a V code listed first on your neurosurgeon's claims.

You can use V codes as the primary diagnosis when your neurosurgeons provide follow-up care for a patient with past injuries and/or treatment.

Scenario #1: A patient suffers a traumatic spinal fracture due to a fall. "If a patient returns for follow-up care after a [spinal] fracture, you shouldn't report the fracture code again," explains **Susan Vogelberger, CPC**, business office coordinator for the **Orthopedic Surgery Center** at **Beeghly Medical Park** in Ohio.

In other words, if the spinal fracture is no longer an acute condition (that is, the fracture has healed following physician care), you are incorrect to use a fracture code as a primary diagnosis. Rather, you should turn to [V54.17](#) (Aftercare for healing traumatic fracture of vertebrae).

Pitfall: Coders and physicians often make the mistake of overlooking V codes for a patient whose disease process is no longer active, notes **Jean Acevedo, LHRM, CPC, CHC**, senior consultant with **Acevedo Consulting Incorporated** in Delray Beach, FL.

Scenario #2: For instance, a female patient who has successfully undergone surgery for removal of a brain neoplasm visits the neurosurgeon for evaluation of wound and neurological deficits.

Rather than report an acute diagnosis of brain neoplasm (for instance, 191.1, Malignant neoplasm of brain, frontal lobe)--which is inaccurate--you should select V58.42 (Aftercare following surgery for neoplasm) to reflect that the check-up is for a condition that is no longer acute. "Aftercare visit codes cover situations where the initial treatment of a disease or injury has been performed and the patient requires continued care during the healing or recovery phase," according to ICD-9 guidelines.

Another use: You should also employ V codes for "continuing surveillance following completed treatment of a disease," according to the ICD-9 guidelines, but don't confuse them with aftercare codes. **Example:** After a year without complications, the patient in Scenario #2 returns to see the surgeon for evaluation of any possible recurrence. In this case, you should report V67.09 (Follow-up examination, following other surgery).