

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Part B Coding Coach: Review Post-Procedural Infection Code Options Set to Debut Oct. 1

The 2019 diagnosis codes include over 300 additions.

With 320 new diagnosis codes ready for release this fall - in addition to 172 code revisions - Part B practices will have quite a few options in 2019. CMS published the full listing of new, deleted, and revised codes in mid-June.

Check out Post-Procedural Infection Codes

Effective Oct. 1, you'll find coding updates that allow additional specificity in post-procedural infection coding. Three codes are scheduled for deletion in this category: T81.4XXA (Infection following a procedure, initial encounter), T81.4XXD (Infection following a procedure, subsequent encounter), and T81.4XXS (Infection following a procedure, sequela).

To replace these deleted codes, ICD-10 is going infinitely more granular. You'll find over 20 new codes that describe more specifics of the post-procedural infection or other condition, all of which fall under the following parent codes:

- T81.40 -- Infection following a procedure, unspecified
- T81.41 -- ... superficial incisional surgical site
- T81.42 -- ... deep incisional surgical site
- T81.43 -- ... organ and space surgical site
- T81.44 -- Sepsis following a procedure
- T81.49 -- Infection following a procedure, other surgical site

The above codes represent the primary new codes, each of which will expand out to additional characters to describe whether the encounter was initial, subsequent, or for sequela. An example from the T81.40 section follows:

- T81.40XA -- Infection following a procedure, unspecified, initial encounter
- T81.40XD -- ... subsequent encounter
- T81.40XS -- ... sequela

The additional codes in the series follow this lead, with the "A," "D," and "S" seventh character designations.

Check Out These Examples

Consider the following scenarios to see how you may encounter postsurgical infection billing:

Example 1: A patient was hospitalized for a pulmonary embolism, and a surgeon removed the clot and inserted a filter to prevent any future issues. The patient presents to your practice several weeks after the procedure for a planned transfer of care from the surgeon. The pulmonologist notices that the patient has swelling, pus, and inflammation at the surgical site. She asks the patient if he has shown the surgeon the issue and the patient says he cancelled his follow-up with the surgeon due to scheduling issues and planned to only continue follow-up with the pulmonologist.

Answer: The pulmonologist prescribes an antibiotic and contacts the surgeon's office to arrange for a complete post-surgical follow-up later that day. The pulmonologist will link the visit to T81.41XA (Infection following a procedure, superficial incisional surgical site, initial encounter).

Example 2: The surgeon performs a partial colectomy with closure of the distal segment. Several days later, the patient presents to your practice and the surgical site shows swelling, pus and inflammation. The physician incises the surgical

wound and drains fluid from it and prescribes antibiotics.

Answer: For this situation, you will link the I&D code to T81.41XA (Infection following a procedure, superficial incisional surgical site, initial encounter).

Resource: To access the entire list of new, revised, and deleted ICD-10 codes, visit the CMS website at www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/2019-ICD-10-CM.html.