

Eli's Rehab Report

You Be the Coder: Use V67.09 for Annual Visit

Test your coding knowledge. Determine how you would code this situation before looking at the box below for the answer.

Question: We often see joint-replacement patients for rehab after their surgery is complete, and we usually ask them to return for an annual office visit to check how they are coping with the artificial joint. Should we report V54.81 (Aftercare following joint replacement) as the ICD-9 code for these visits?

New Hampshire Subscriber

Answer: Report V54.81 (followed by the V code that identifies the joint-replacement site, V43.60-V43.69) only if the patient is still recovering from surgery. Although patients heal at different rates, your patient will likely not require aftercare a full year after her hip replacement, and she certainly wouldn't require aftercare annually.

Your practice is more likely performing a follow-up examination, during which the physician checks the joint placement, mobility, range of motion, and gait. If this is the case, you should assign V67.09 (Follow-up examination, following other surgery) and V43.64 Organ or tissue replaced by other means; hip joint) to the E/M code (99211-99215).

Suppose your patient presents at your practice four months after hip-replacement surgery and appears healthy without obvious surgical complications. Do not automatically select V67.09 or V54.81 without first talking to the patient's physician. He or she is the only person who can decide whether the patient is in the "aftercare" or "follow-up" phase and should make the final determination.