

## Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

### CODING UPDATE: IT'S TIME TO SWALLOW NEW DYSPHAGIA CODES

#### More specificity required for speech therapy.

When you code for a patient with stroke-related or other dysphagia, stopping too soon can lead to inadequate treatment, increased medical review and more payment denials.

**The bottom line:** You can no longer use the code for dysphagia--787.2--you used before Oct. 1, because it now requires a fifth digit.

Beginning Oct. 1 home care coders must use the new ICD-9-CM codes the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** released in June. Among these codes are six new dysphagia codes. These additional codes will indicate the phase of swallowing the dysphagia affects, says coding consultant **Tricia Twombly, BSN, RN, HCS-D**, with **Foundation Management Services** in Denton, TX.

**Added complexity:** As of Oct. 1, the late effect CVA with dysphagia code--438.82--requires you to add the dysphagia code to specify the phase of swallowing affected, warns **Jun Mapili, PT, MAEd** coding supervisor with **Global Home Care** in Troy, MI. When these two codes occur together, the patient will accrue case mix points for added reimbursement under the new PPS payment rules, he adds.

**The basics:** Dysphagia is defined as difficulty swallowing, Mapili explains. Swallowing allows the body to securely transport food from the mouth to the stomach.

In this amazingly complex process, "conscious and unconscious events [are] carried out by over 40 pairs of muscles that have to be finely coordinated," Mapili says. Countless diseases affect this fundamental process, he adds.

#### Code Dysphagia After Speech Therapy Evaluation

The speech therapist can select the correct code after completing the swallowing assessment, says **Lemmietta McNeilly, PhD, CCC-SLP, ASHA** Fellow with the Rockville, MD-based **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**, in a reminder to association members. The updated dysphagia codes are:

787.20--Dysphagia, unspecified  
787.21--Dysphagia, oral phase  
787.22--Dysphagia, oropharyngeal phase  
787.23--Dysphagia, pharyngeal phase  
787.24--Dysphagia, pharyngoesophageal phase  
787.29--Other dysphagia