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CODING UPDATE: Look For ICD-10 Clues In the 2007 ICD-9 Changes

Alphanumeric codes mean more details.

Fifth-digit ICD-9 extensions like those created to report attention to dressings and sutures as well as mucositis are more specific, and this increased detail indicates a move toward the transition to ICD-10, **Linda Martien, CPC, CPC-H**, overseer of coding operations at **National Healing Corp.** of Boca Raton, FL. said during a recent Eli audio conference. ICD-9 is running out of space because it is made up only of numbers, she says. ICD-10 will use both letters and numbers and will be more conducive to the always-growing number of procedures and diagnoses.

ICD-10 won't premier in the United States before the fall of 2007, Martien says.

What to expect: The first character of each ICD-10 code will be alphabetical, and some of these codes will be as many as seven characters. This new code set will offer significantly more codes, while combination diagnosis/symptom codes will reduce the number of codes you'll need to report to fully describe some conditions.

Time to adjust: Once the ICD-10 codes do premier, you will have two years to implement them. Learn more about ICD-10 at the **World Health Organization's** Web site, www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/.