

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

ICD-10: Look for Fewer New Codes as You Prepare for ICD-10

Say goodbye to ICD-9 in 2013.

If you've been wondering how you can stay up-to-date on the annual changes to the ICD-9 code set while simultaneously preparing for the 2013 transition to ICD-10, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** has good news for you.

The **ICD-9-CM Coordination & Maintenance (C&M) Committee** has decided to implement a partial freeze for both ICD-9-CM codes and ICD-10-CM codes prior to the switch. CMS received "considerable interest ... in dramatically reducing the number of annual updates to both coding systems" as ICD-10 implementation ramps up.

Goal: Reducing the volume of code updates should give "vendors, providers, system maintainers, payers, and educators a better opportunity to prepare for the implementation of ICD-10," the committee explained.

"While the healthcare industry is currently used to handling annual code set modifications, preparation for a transition to an entirely new code set is a much larger and more complex endeavor; incorporating additional code set modifications during the final stages of ICD-10-CM/PCS implementation preparation only adds further cost and complexity," the **American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)** said in an opinion supporting the freeze.

The partial freeze will be implemented as follows:

The last regular annual update to both ICD-9 and ICD-10 code sets will be made on October 1, 2011.

On October 1, 2012, there will be only limited code updates to both ICD-9-CM and ICD-10 code sets to capture new technology and new diseases.

On October 1, 2013, there will be only limited code updates to ICD-10 code sets to capture new technologies and diagnoses (meaning it will be implemented as it is on that date). There will be no updates to ICD-9-CM on October 1, 2013, as the system will no longer be a HIPAA standard.

On October 1, 2014, regular updates to ICD-10 will begin.

The ICD-9 Coordination & Maintenance Committee will continue to meet twice a year during the freeze. And the public will have the opportunity to comment on whether new diagnosis and procedure codes should be created based on the need to capture new technologies or diseases.

Any code requests that do not meet the criteria for inclusion during the freeze will be considered for implementation in ICD-10 once the partial freeze is ended -- on or after October 1, 2014.

Looking forward: There will likely be fewer large annual updates once we transition to ICD-10-CM for two reasons, says **Lisa Selman-Holman, JD, BSN, RN, HCS-D, COS-C**, consultant and principal of **Selman-Holman & Associates** and **CoDR -- Coding Done Right** in Denton, Texas. First, because ICD-10-CM is already so complete, and second because ICD-10-CM is owned by the World Health Organization and it has to approve any changes to the code set.