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News Flash: ICD-10 Could Be On The Fast Track

AHIMA urges Congress to move quickly to adopt the updated coding system.

Coders for years have been hearing about the ICD-9 system's replacement, ICD-10. All that talk soon will turn into action, if the **American Health Information Management Association** gets its way.

Congress should work to expedite the adoption of ICD-10, urged AHIMA CEO **Linda Kloss, MA, RHIA** in testimony July 27 before the **Sub-committee on Health of the House Ways and Means Committee**. This system should be a vital part of Congress' support for health IT and its focus on improving the accuracy and consistency of health care data, Kloss told committee members.

Coding Must Change With the Times

The crux of the matter is that the current ICD-9 system has been in existence since the 1970s and no longer is able to capture today's medical knowledge, AHIMA argues in a recent release.

"Just think about how medical practice has changed over the past thirty years," Kloss testified. "The coding system we're using today was developed in an era before MRIs, before laser surgeries, before any of us had ever heard of AIDS or any of the medications used today to treat it. That is a real problem," she said.

Another problem: The ICD-9 system soon will be unable to support additional procedural codes, which will require coders to resort to the existing non-discrete codes for new procedures. "This will have serious implications for quality reporting, research and appropriate payment for advancements in medical technology," AHIMA notes.

"Adoption of ICD-10-CM and ICD-10-PCS is an essential component of the health IT strategy being advanced by Congress and the Administration, not a diversion from it," Kloss said. "We need to improve the quality of the data in order to reap the full benefits of our investment in health IT."

To that end, Congress should require the **Department of Health and Human Services** to publish a proposed rule as soon as possible. This should be followed quickly by a final rule on the new coding system, Kloss insisted.

Editor's Note: A copy of Kloss' complete testimony is posted at www.ahima.org/dc/testimonyicd100705.asp.