

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

Reader Question: Sing ICD-9's Synonyms Praises

Question: If I look up a condition in the ICD-9-CM manual's index and the condition is followed by words in parentheses, do any or all of these words need to be in the patient's record for me to report the code?

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Answer: ICD-9-CM includes supplementary words in parentheses to ease and expand your coding, not make it more difficult and limiting.

According to ICD-9 guidelines, "the terms within the parentheses are referred to as nonessential modifiers" and they "may be present or absent in the statement of a disease or procedure without affecting the code number to which it is assigned."

Let's say a patient has acute mesenteric infarction. You look up the condition in the Index and find the following:

Infarct, infarction

Mesentery, mesenteric (embolic) (thrombotic) (with gangrene) 557.0

You should report 557.0 regardless of whether the terms "embolic" "thrombotic" or "with gangrene" appear in the report.