

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

READER QUESTIONS: Conquer Burn Code Confusion

Question: We admitted a patient for physical therapy for gait training who also has a pair of burns: a second-degree burn on her right wrist and a first-degree burn on the back of her right hand. How many diagnosis codes should I report to account for these burns?

Answer: Two. Burns of the same local site are coded to the highest degree recorded. But these burns involve two local sites--the wrist and back of hand.

The code for the burn on the wrist is 944.27 (Burn of wrist[s] and hand[s]; blisters, epidermal loss [second degree]; wrist) and on the back of the hand is 944.16 (...erythema [first degree]; back of hand).

No matter what: When choosing diagnosis codes for burns, include a code from the 948.xx set (Burns classified according to extent of body surface involved) to represent the total body surface area (TBSA) of the burn. So if a patient had burns to 8 percent of TBSA, with no mention of third-degree burns, you would include 948.00 (Burn [any degree] involving less than 10 percent of body surface; less than 10 percent or unspecified). Including 948 is especially important when coding third-degree burns.