

## Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

### READER QUESTIONS: Keep a Sharp Eye on Observation Codes

Question: Can you explain the wording in the Index for categories V29 (Observation and evaluation of newborns for suspected condition not found) and V71 (Observation and evaluation for suspected conditions not found), so that I could better understand their intent?

Since these codes are designated as primary only, are they meant to be used only by the treating facility or physician who did the work-up (and needs to bill) for testing that ruled out the suspected condition?

-- Massachusetts Subscriber

Answer: Both V29 and V71 are used to report a patient who, although he showed no signs or symptoms, was suspected to have an abnormal condition. But after examination and observation, the patient is found not to have the condition. In other words, these codes are used to show that the provider was looking for a problem but didn't find it.

For example, a parent might bring a child to the emergency room because he thought the child had swallowed a marble but, after an examination, it turned out that hadn't actually happened. The correct code to report in this case would be V71.89 (Observation for other specified suspected conditions).

These observation V codes should be used in very limited circumstances and never when the patient shows any signs or symptoms of the suspected condition. You are correct in speculating that they would be used by the treating facility or physician. These codes are not likely to be used in home care.