

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

Reader Questions: Look To Guidelines Before Assigning 948

Question: On page 45 of your June 2008 issue, you state "If a patient has no third degree burns, there is no need to report a 948.xx code in addition to the burn location."

The note under code 948 states, "This category is to be used when the site of the burn is unspecified, or with categories 940-947 when the site is specified."

If there is no third degree burn associated with a burn classified to 940-947, then the fifth digit would be 0 to indicate less than 10 percent or unspecified.

If code 948 is not used in conjunction with these categories for burns of less than third degree, then we have no way of reporting percentage of body burned. Please advise.

-- California Subscriber

Answer: The Official Coding Guidelines state that it is "advisable to use category 948 as an additional code for reporting purposes when there is mention of a third-degree burn involving 20 percent or more of the body surface."

The fourth digit of the 948 code (Burns classified according to extent of body surface) identifies the percentage of total body surface involved in a burn (all degrees). The fifth-digits are assigned to identify the percentage of body surface involved in a third-degree burn.

Fifth-digit zero (0) is assigned when less than 10 percent or when no body surface is involved in a third-degree burn.