

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

Reader Questions: No Rolling Implementation For ICD-10

Question: I've heard that the Oct. 1, 2013 ICD-10 implementation date will vary -- that the new code set will phase in depending on provider type. Is this correct? If so, when will home health providers need to start using ICD-10?

-- Florida Subscriber

Answer: No matter where you work (home health agency, hospital, ASC, physician practice, clinic, etc.), the Oct. 1, 2013 ICD-10 deadline applies to you.

"I must stress quite strongly that Oct. 1, 2013 will be the date that everyone will begin to use ICD-10," said **Pat Brooks, RHIA**, senior technical advisor with CMS, during a March 23 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Open Door Forum call. "There will be no grace period," Brooks said. "In other words, we will not be slipping the date beyond Oct. 1, 2013 for ICD-10 codes, and this will be a compulsory implementation of this system."

CMS will not accept ICD-9 codes for any dates of service on or after Oct. 1, 2013, but will continue to process claims for services prior to that date "for a period of time," Brooks said.

Sue Bowman, RHIA, CCS, director of coding policy and compliance with the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), also aimed to dispel several other ICD-10 myths during the call:

Books will exist: "One myth is that there won't be any hard copy ICD-10 code books," Bowman said, "but that's not true. ICD-10-CM code books are actually already available from some publishers, and are of a normal, manageable size," she said.

Documentation won't be overhauled: Another myth is that insurers will require unnecessarily detailed medical record documentation. But, Bowman noted, "much of the detail contained in ICD-10-CM is already in the medical record documentation, but it's just not being utilized because it's not needed for ICD-9 coding."

ICD-10 won't be user-unfriendly: One of the bigger myths regarding ICD-10 is that the increased number of codes will make ICD-10 impossible to use. Not so, Bowman said. "Just as the size of a dictionary doesn't make the dictionary more difficult to use, a higher number of codes doesn't necessarily increase the complexity of the coding," Bowman said. In fact, she noted, greater specificity and clinical accuracy should actually make ICD-10 easier to use.