OASIS Alert

Diagnosis Coding ~ Find Correct M0230/M0240 Codes Fast With These Expert Tips

If you stop reading too soon, you can expect your code to be wrong.

If you're tired of locating a term in the alphabetic index of your ICD-9 coding manual only to be told, "see condition," it's time to fight back. Cut your coding time in half by learning how to use the coding manual's conventions and quirks.

Example: Your patient has benign hy-pertrophy of the prostate, and you look up "prostate" in the alphabetic index. Rather than a code, you find "see condition." You try "benign hypertrophy," but here you are greeted with "see also condition," along with a few codes that don't match your patient's diagnosis. Finally, you try looking under "hypertrophy," and you find the code you were searching for: 600.00 (Hypertrophy, prostate, benign).

What to do: Be an investigator and think deductively, says **Keith Nielsen,** PPS/OASIS coordinator with **Great Lakes Home Healthcare** in Erie, PA. "The main terms in the index are set flush with the left margin of each column and are in boldface type. They represent diseases, such as 'pneumonia;' conditions, such as 'fracture;' nouns, such as 'syndrome;' and adjectives, such as 'large,'" says **Ann Zeisset,** with the **American Health Information Management Association** in Chicago.

Here's How To Narrow Your Search

Keep these categories in mind as you begin your search to narrow down your options from the start. And use the following search tips:

• **Look for the noun.** For example, with benign prostatic hypertrophy, both "benign" and "prostatic" are adjectives that describe the noun, "hypertrophy."

• **Save body parts for later.** Never start your search by looking under the body part, or you will be advised to "see condition."

• **Try conditions or symptoms.** Search for the condition or symptom that caused or contributed to the diagnosis you are looking for, says Nielsen. Other helpful terms you may consider when searching the alphabetic index include "complication," "disease," "abnormal" or "injury," he suggests.

Example: Your patient has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you search under "pulmonary" or "chronic," you will only find the dreaded "see condition." Which term is the condition or symptom? "The clue is in the diagnosis itself; this is an obstructive disorder," explains Nielsen. If you search under the term "obstruction, obstructed, ob-structive" you will find several disorders listed as subterms, but the subterm "pulmonary" doesn't give you the code you are seeking.

Don't throw in the towel yet; be persistent and use your powers of deduction. "Ask yourself which other terms you could look under instead of 'pulmonary,'" advises Nielsen. The terms "lung" and "respiratory" should come to mind. When you look for either of these subterms under the "obstruction" category, you will find the code 496 (Chronic airway obstruction, not elsewhere classified).

Tip: Another way to search for this code is to look under the term "disease," subterms "lung," "pulmonary," or "respiratory," says Nielsen.

Found Your Term? Keep Reading

Once you locate your term, be sure to review all of the indented sub-terms below it for more specificity, advises Zeisset.

Example: If you stop your search for female stress incontinence once you locate code 788.30 (Incontinence), you'll assign an incorrect code. Look under the sub-term "stress," and you'll find the correct code is 625.6 (Stress incontinence, female).

Always follow any cross-references in the index such as "see" or "see also" notes, advises Zeisset. Other notes, such as the explanatory notes in the "injury" and "fracture" sections, will also help guide you to the correct code assignment, she says.

Example: Looking up the code for degenerative arthritis of the lumbar spine, you turn to the entry for "arthritis." You check the sub-terms for "degenerative" and find code 715.9 with the note "see also osteoarthrosis." Also under degenerative, you find the sub-term "spine" and the code 721.90. You follow the instruction to look up osteoarthrosis and under the sub-term "spine" you find the note "see also spondylosis" along with the code 721.90.

You may think your search is done since you have located 721.90 under both search terms, but you need to follow the instructions to see also spondylosis. When you look up this term, and the sub-term "lumbar," you'll find the correct code with the specific site, 721.3 (Lumbrosacral spondylosis without myelopathy, lumbar or lumbosacral: arthritis).

Get to Know the Quirks

Some codes aren't in the most obvious place in the alphabetic index, so it helps to become familiar with its conventions. Experts offer the following four tips:

1. The V code V58.83 (Encounter for therapeutic drug monitoring) isn't listed under "encounter," "therapeutic," "drug" or "monitoring." Instead, it is listed under "Admission for" or "Test," points out consultant **Melinda Gaboury** with **Healthcare Provider Solutions** in Nashville, TN.

2. If the condition is named after a person, like Lou Gehrig's disease, look under the name.

3. To find the code for an infected joint prosthesis search under "complications" then "infection/inflammation."

4. Expect to find many conditions in multiple locations in the alphabetic index, says Zeisset.

Example: You can find complications of medical or surgical care under the main term "complications" as well as under the name of the condition. Conditions that include the terms disease or syndrome in the title may be found under "disease" or "syndrome," as well as under the disease or syndrome's name, Zeisset says.