

## Modifier Coding Alert

### ICD-10: Be Ready for More COPD Codes That Spell Out Complications

**Four of the seven COPD base code descriptors for ICD-9 are direct matches to ICD-10.**

If you are worried about not being able to code a cut and dry case of emphysema in the future, don't be. The code for a diagnosis of emphysema is a one-to-one ICD-9 to ICD-10 swap. If you have a condition with a complication, keep reading to learn how you will need to report those cases when ICD-10 goes into effect in October.

#### Notice What Won't Change

Having a one-to-one relationship between some ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes is an advantage with the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) codes.

"With all the specificity needed for ICD-10, looking at these respiratory issues shows that we had the specificity needed for ICD-10 in ICD-9," says **Suzan (Berman Hauptman, MPM, CPC, CEMC, CEDC)**, director of coding operations at Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh, Pa. "For a pulmonologist, the transition from one set to the other will be a smooth transition."

Some of the COPD codes create a clean crosswalk. For example, if you use 492 (Emphysema) today, with ICD-10 you will use J43 (Emphysema). The asthma codes are one-to-one swaps, too. Code 493 (Asthma) will be J45 (Asthma) later this year.

**ICD-9:** There are seven base COPD as follows:

- 490 □ Bronchitis, not specified as acute or chronic
- 491 □ Chronic bronchitis
- 492 □ Emphysema
- 493 □ Asthma
- 494 □ Bronchiectasis
- 495 □ Extrinsic allergic alveolitis
- 496 □ Chronic airway obstruction, not elsewhere classified.

**ICD-10:** In the future, you'll have the following base codes:

- J40 □ Bronchitis, not specified as acute or chronic
- J41 □ Simple and mucopurulent chronic bronchitis
- J42 □ Unspecified chronic bronchitis
- J43 □ Emphysema
- J44 □ Other chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- J45 □ Asthma
- J47 □ Bronchiectasis.

The ICD-9 codes currently expand up to five digits. Under ICD-10, for more specificity in the case of complications, you will need to go out to a fifth or even a sixth character for these base COPD codes.

**Example:** You will need to report 493.92 (Asthma unspecified with [acute] exacerbation) as J45.901 (Unspecified asthma with (acute) exacerbation) with the transition to ICD-10.

#### Cope With Separate Diagnosis and Complication Codes

There is some coding confusion when a code excludes a complication. If you have a patient that has COPD with a complication of acute bronchitis, you will use J44.1 (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease with [acute] exacerbation), but you will also need J20.- (Acute bronchitis, ...). There is a possibility that a patient will have COPD and bronchitis.

**An issue:** Not all experts believe that the transition to ICD-10 for COPD codes will be smooth.

"Even documenting the components of the COPD is more complicated in ICD-10-CM because the type of emphysema or the type of chronic bronchitis would also need to be included to avoid unspecified codes," says **Cathy Jennings, BS, CPC, CEDC, CHONC, CAPM**, managing consultant at Medical Revenue Solutions in Missouri.