

## Pain Management Coding Alert

### Reader Question: Get Clear on the Difference Between 'Initial Treatment' and 'Onset'

**Question:** What is the difference between the "Date of the initial treatment" and the "Date of injury/onset"?

Minnesota Subscriber

**Answer:** According to WPS Medicare, the date of the initial treatment is the date when the patient first visited the provider, who then assessed the patient and diagnosed him, started the treatment. In other cases, date of initial treatment may also mean the date when a known patient comes back to the provider after a long time for a sudden flare up of a preexisting condition.

**Example:** A patient may have fallen down the steps on Jan. 4, 2016, but is first seen by the pain management provider for their back pain associated with the fall on Jan. 19, 2016. In this example, 1/4/2016 would be the date of injury/onset while 1/19/2016 would be the date of initial treatment for the back pain.

**Bottom line:** The date when the provider begins treatment for a fresh set of patient complaints, will be your date of initial treatment. The date of injury or onset is the actual date when the injury occurred.