

## Pain Management Coding Alert

### You Be the Coder: Ask These Questions Before Choosing Unequal Limb Dx

**Question:** An established patient reports to the PM specialist for an evaluation and management (E/M) service for a patient with acquired unequal limb length. Notes indicate that the provider performed a level-three E/M service. How should I code this encounter?

Indiana Subscriber

**Answer:** Unless it is spelled out completely in the notes, acquired unequal limb length ICD-10 coding is difficult. Find answers to these questions before choosing an ICD-10 code for this 99213 (Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of an established patient, which requires at least 2 of these 3 key components: an expanded problem focused history; an expanded problem focused examination; medical decision making of low complexity ... ) claim:

**What is the laterality of the condition?** You'll need to try to find out whether the unequal limb is the right or left limb. According to the ICD-10 manual "The site used should correspond to the shorter limb."

**What is the anatomy of the condition?** In addition to knowing the laterality, you'll also need to look for the exact area that makes the limb unequal. For coding purposes, ICD-10 features these locations for unequal limb length:

- Humerus,
- Ulna,
- Radius,
- Femur,
- Tibia, and
- Fibula.

So let's say that the notes indicate that it was left-sided acquired unequal limb length of the ulna. On the claim, you'd use M21.732 (Unequal limb length (acquired), left ulna) as a diagnosis.

**Last resort:** If unequal limb is all you have to go on when selecting an ICD-10 code, use the more general M21.70 (Unequal limb length (acquired), unspecified site) as a diagnosis.