Tips and Tools for Surviving the Transition to ICD-10

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ICD-9 was created in the 1970s as the ninth revision of a coding system originally designed to categorize morbidity and mortality. While not a designed purpose, the U.S. adopted ICD-9 for payment purposes. For many reasons, the ICD-9 system is unable to keep up with medical and informatics advances. ICD-10, both the clinical categories (ICD-CM) and procedure codes (ICD-PCS), represent a significant advance over ICD-9 by offering much greater diagnostic specificity and include many newer procedural codes not available in ICD-9. A 2004 Rand Corporation study estimated the costs of implementing ICD-10 at that time to be $425-$1,150M, mostly due to training, implementation costs and transient productivity losses. The estimated financial benefits ranged from $700-$7,700M from improved coding accuracy, claims management and decreased fraud amongst other benefits, albeit an estimated 5-10 years would be needed to see such savings. More specific and accurate coding should allow for research opportunities, especially in disease management, population health, clinical effectiveness and health care delivery. Understanding patient acuity is important in a pay for quality environment.

For interested souls, there are several online resources that explain the logic behind ICD-10. For the rest of us, here are a few helpful hints on how to survive the next few months.

- Connect with your institutional resources for tools, tips and help. Most health care delivery systems have invested time and treasure to support this conversion. Find these folks and use them.
- Create specialty-specific ICD-10 coding sheets for your top 50-100 diagnoses. For example, have one for sickle cell disease and related complications, one for hemostatic disorders, one for solid tumors and chemotherapy-related diagnoses, etc. While there are several online and EHR-embedded resources (see below), sometimes a laminated paper resource is the fastest way to get at this information.
- Many of the EHRs have embedded ICD-10 diagnosis tools to facilitate this task. Examples include EPIC’s Diagnosis Calculator and Cerner’s Diagnosis Assistant. Some use 3rd party tools such as Intelligent Medical Objects (IMO) to convert “medical speak” to ICD-9 or ICD-10 codes. While sometimes there is a 1:1 ICD-9 or IMO to ICD-10 conversion, other times this is one too many, so these tools can be useful because they quickly hone the conversion down to a manageable number of possible ICD-10 codes.
- There are available online tools or even apps that can be used for code look-up. The CMS code look-up is quick, easy and free (https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/staticpages/icd-10-code-lookup.aspx) but limited in terminology. For instance, searching for
neuroblastoma gives no result; one needs to search for terms malignant and adrenal to see the possibilities.

- An important concern for the compliance folks is that the increased specificity is not just required for the codes, but must also be documented in the medical record.

Whether in the long run, the significant conversion and workflow costs to this conversion will pay off remains to be seen, but inasmuch as the government has committed to its implementation, it is going to happen on Oct. 1, 2015.


**AAP Resources:**

- **AAP News Article: ICD-10-CM: back to basics** - http://aapnews.aappublications.org/content/36/9/30.1.full.pdf+html
- **AAP Pediatric ICD-10-CM: A Manual for Provider-Based Coding**
  Less than 60 days to go until October 1, when new ICD-10-CM codes must be used. This guide helps practices navigate the vast pediatric code set and streamline the process to reimbursement.
- **Principles of Pediatric ICD-10-CM Coding**
  This practical readiness and training tool offers quick and easy access to a wealth of pediatric-specific guidance for diagnosis coding. Sections within each chapter include coding scenarios, guideline instructions and Notable Change alerts.
- **New 2nd edition - Pediatric Code Crosswalk: ICD-9-CM to ICD-10-CM**
  This handy quick reference can help practices integrate the ICD-10-CM nomenclature and code set. The updated 2nd edition provides time-saving coding tips, tables and tools specific to the cross-walked codes.