ICD-10-CM Coding Steps

Coding Steps

Aside from being knowledgeable of official coding conventions and guidelines, there are seven steps for correct coding. These include:

1. Look up the main term and subterm entries as appropriate in the alphabetic index. Review continued lines and additional subterms that may appear in the next column or on the next page.

2. Note all parenthetical terms (nonessential modifiers) that help in code selection but do not affect code assignment. Shaded vertical guidelines in the Index are provided to help determine the indentation level for each subterm in relation to the main terms.

3. Pay close attention to the following instructions in the Index:
   - “see,” “see also,” and “see category” cross-references
   - “with”/“without” notes
   - “omit code” notes
   - “due to” subterms
   - other instructions found in note boxes, such as “code by site”

4. Locate the code in the system-specific alphanumerically arranged tabular list. Do not code from the alphabetic index without verifying the accuracy of the code in the tabular list.

5. Read all instructional notes, including:
   - “includes” and both types of “excludes” notes
   - “use additional code” and “code first underlying disease” instructions
   - “code also”
   - 4th, 5th, and 6th character requirements and 7th character extension requirements
   - age and sex symbols
6. Consult the official ICD-10-CM guidelines, which govern the use of specific codes. These guidelines provide both general and chapter-specific coding guidance.

7. Confirm and assign the correct code.

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