

Initial Versus Subsequent Encounter

In an effort to aid Health Information Management Coding Professionals with ICD-10-CM, the following training tip is provided with an educational intent.

Initial Encounter:

- 7th character “A”, initial encounter is used while the patient is receiving active treatment for the condition. Examples of active treatment are: surgical treatment, emergency department encounter, and evaluation and continuing treatment by the same or a different physician.
- For complication codes, active treatment refers to treatment for the condition described by the code, even though it may be related to an earlier precipitating problem.
- Traumatic fractures are coded using the appropriate 7th character for initial encounter (A, B, C) while the patient is receiving active treatment for the fracture.
- The appropriate 7th character for initial encounter should also be assigned for a patient who delayed seeking treatment for the fracture or nonunion.

Examples:

- T84.50XA, Infection and inflammatory reaction due to unspecified internal joint prosthesis, initial encounter, is used when active treatment is provided for the infection, even though the condition relates to the prosthetic device, implant or graft that was placed at a previous encounter.
- S82.251E, displaced comminuted fracture of the distal shaft of the right tibia, subsequent encounter, open fracture, type I or II with routine healing.

Subsequent Encounter:

- 7th character “D” subsequent encounter is used for encounters after the patient has received active treatment of the condition and is receiving routine care for the condition during the healing or recovery phase. Examples of subsequent care are: cast change or removal, an x-ray to check healing status of fracture, removal of external or internal fixation device, medication adjustment, other aftercare and follow up visits following treatment of the injury or condition
- Fractures are coded using the appropriate 7th character for subsequent care for encounters after the patient has completed active treatment of the fracture and is receiving routine care for the fracture during the healing or recovery phase
- Care of complications of fractures, such as malunion and nonunion, should be reported with the appropriate 7th character for subsequent care with nonunion (K, M, N,) or subsequent care with malunion (P, Q, R).

Reference: 2017 Official ICD-10-CM Coding Guidelines (CMS.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/Downloads/2017-ICD-10-CM-Guidelines.pdf)

This tip sheet was developed by the CHIA Coding and Data Quality Committee as an educational resource. The information in this document is not intended to impart legal advice. This overview is intended as an educational tool only and should not be relied upon as legal or compliance advice. If you have any legal questions about the information contained herein, you should consult your attorney or other professional legal services provider.

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CHIA Past-Presidents who are in attendance in the Exhibit Hall. Prepare a 30-second introduction statement about yourself and include your career field of interest, i.e., coding or data analytics. Be sure you have your business card or contact information handy and some pre-planned topics for discussion. A portfolio, if applicable, wouldn't hurt either.

Remember to keep in contact with your past and current HIM faculty as well as co-workers. When you create that networking spark, things can grow and even advance or change your career!

References

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