7th Character: Sequela (S)

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

The 7th character “S” is used for complications or conditions that arise as a direct result of a condition, such as a scar formation after a burn. The scars are sequela of the burn. A sequela is the residual effect (condition produced) after the acute phase of an illness or injury has terminated.

- When using the 7th character “S”, it is necessary to use both the injury code (e.g., burn) that precipitated the sequela and the code for the sequela (e.g., scar) itself.
- The specific type of sequela (e.g., scar) is sequenced first, followed by the injury code (e.g., burn).
- The “S” is added only to the injury code (e.g., burn) not the sequela code (e.g., scar).

Use additional external cause code to identify the source, place, and intent of the burn if your office chooses to capture external cause codes.


Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L90.5</td>
<td>Scar conditions and fibrosis of skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T22.212S</td>
<td>Burn of second degree of left forearm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coding Clinic is the official resource and authority for ICD-10 coding rules and conventions.

This tip sheet was developed by the CHIA Coding and Data Quality Committee as an education 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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