

Inpatient Coding, Billing and Reimbursement Issues for the Coding Professional

## Coding Compliance Plan

The "Practice Brief" in the July – August 2001 issue of AHIMA's Journal included a plan for developing a coding compliance policy document. It is important to have compliance policies included in your written coding policies and procedures. This plan published in the Journal has some excellent suggestions concerning what to include in your policies. A

hospital's compliance plan should include a process to identify areas of risk with monitoring, education, and documentation of findings. Written approved policies and procedures are not only important, but need to be continually revised and updated. Check out this article and use it as a reference for updating your policies and procedures.

## DRG Sequencing

Whatever method your Business Office uses to report UB-92 information to your fiscal intermediary, the coding and abstracting function needs to be understood as to how it fits into that process. Computer DRG grouping is generally performed for hospital database purposes and for assisting in the coding /sequencing process. However, assigning a DRG is not required and is not part of the reporting process for Medicare reimbursement. The fiscal intermediary uses the codes reported and groups those codes for DRG reimbursement.

It is important to know that **the first nine diagnoses** and **the first six procedures** are transferred to the UB-92. Some grouping programs use all of the codes entered into the database for DRG calculation, but do not remind the coder to move all of the codes used in the

DRG assignment into the top nine and six. If this re-sequencing is not part of the coder's procedure, there is the possibility that the DRG reimbursement would not be what the hospital is expecting.

Periodic auditing of DRG payment compared to the hospital database would identify any problems with your hospital billing process. (This advice also applies to outpatient APC reimbursement. Periodic checking of reimbursement against what you expect reimbursement to be will demonstrate if your computer process is working properly.) Remember that it is the coder's responsibility to make sure the appropriate nine diagnoses and six procedures are reported to the fiscal intermediary.

## Urosepsis

If I could ban one word from medical terminology, that word would be *urosepsis*!

...urosepsis is such an imprecise term.

Coding Clinic has published extensive guidelines regarding proper coding of urosepsis, yet some of us still struggle. The reason is, urosepsis is such an imprecise term. We have seen a wide range of answers to physician clarifications as to what was meant by the documented urosepsis. When asked if sepsis was meant, we have seen “that’s what urosepsis is” all the way to “if the patient was septic I would document sepsis.”

Coding Clinic guidelines (last one was 2Q00) state that urosepsis should be clarified to determine if the physician means “sepsis” or “UTI”. Although the alphabetic index still lists

urosepsis NOS as 599.0, the added entries indicate that the physician’s meaning of the imprecise term is vital for accurate coding.

Coding Clinic guidelines as well as the new notations in the alphabetic index support continued clarification in certain circumstances. However, each chart should be evaluated individually. If the chart does not document any signs or symptoms routinely associated with sepsis, it may not be proper to query the physician. Any clarification of sepsis should be documented for defensibility of listing 038.X.

Physician education would be helpful regarding the difficulty in classifying the condition of urosepsis. If the documentation were clearer, the coder would not be faced with the differing opinions as to the meaning of this term. The dreaded urosepsis word is not going to go away.

## OCTOBER UPDATES

It is that time of year again – for new DRG weights and new codes. Be sure to get your October updates from your vender before coding records discharged October first. Accurate weights and codes are vital in making coding and sequencing decisions.