

The Future of ICD-10 Denial Prevention

Five Reliable Steps for Coding Audits and Coder Assessments

ICD-10 coding denials require attention. Wait-and-see is not a logical strategy. Coding audits are the most practical approach.

Have you assessed your coders? Do you know your denial risks? Are you ready for ICD-10 amnesty to end?

“The last thing we want is to submit an ICD-10 claim, get a denial, and then have to defend that claim.”

—President and CEO, Not-for-profit, 10-hospital health system



Dive into the data

Focus on high-risk diagnosis-related group (DRG), monitoring the accuracy of the principal diagnosis, principal procedure, and any CC or MCC conditions. Include the recovery audit program's focus DRGs as well as high-volume or problem prone DRGs.



Focus on specificity

Once you've established a satisfactory accuracy rate for DRG assignment, take a closer look at unspecified codes. What is your unspecified code rate, and what are the possible causes or opportunities for improvement? Have you missed query opportunities?



Be flexible

ICD-10 is a moving target. New clarifications are published frequently, making it critical for organizations to develop and maintain internal coding guidelines in the absence of formal guidance. Consider creating a coder forum in which coders can exchange ideas and help each other navigate the maze of ICD-10. Then codify those decisions via formal policies and procedures.



Conduct an objective assessment of your coders

Conduct an assessment of your coders. Use a reliable, objective tool to assess your coders' ICD-10 coding. Use real records with proven ICD-10 answer keys, and assign the same cases to each of your coders and coding management members. This strategy provides a true comparison across your coding team to identify opportunities for education and improvement.



Strengthen relationships

External coding audits provide an unbiased view of coding accuracy—one that benefits organizations struggling to build coder consensus in ICD-10. The best practice in ICD-9 was to conduct an external audit only quarterly. In ICD-10, monthly external audits are the most reliable way to mitigate coding denial risk and increase coder skill level and confidence.

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