Code Cracker: New Year, New Code Set, New Opportunities

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By Melanie Endicott

I am so excited that ICD-10 is finally here—now we can stop wondering when it's actually going to be implemented and roll up our sleeves to get to work! Now that it's officially here and everyone is using it, we can really start to dig into the details and take advantage of all it has to offer. This month's Code Cracker offers some tips for how to make the most of the year ahead.

Plow through Coding Resources

Because *AHA Coding Clinic* began publishing ICD-10-CM/PCS questions in the fourth quarter of 2012, there are three full years of *Coding Clinic* advice on ICD-10 that all coders should be going back to review now that they are using ICD-10 daily.

Now would also be a good time to take another look at the coding guidelines to ensure that you are correctly applying the codes. There are many similarities between ICD-9-CM and ICD-10-CM coding guidelines, but there are some significant differences that should not be overlooked. And don't forget about the ICD-10-PCS coding guidelines. Now that you've had three full months of using these code sets, a review of the guidelines may shed some light on some of the challenging cases you've encountered.

If you do run into challenging cases, there are many helpful resources available to assist in answering your questions. *AHA Coding Clinic* has already been mentioned. AHIMA's [Engage](#) communities are a great place to ask coding advice from other coding professionals that may have encountered similar situations. AHIMA's [Code Check](#) service provides expert coding advice as well. Don't forget to take advantage of these resources.

Gear up for Big Changes on October 1, 2016

We have been in a code freeze since October 1, 2011. Since then, we have only seen limited code updates that captured new technologies and diseases and a few changes to the guidelines. Buckle up! All of those code changes have been stored up for five years and we will see the first regular updates to ICD-10 on October 1 of this year. It's anticipated that there will be a large number of updates in 2016, so be sure to get trained early and be ready for those changes.

The ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance Committee will be discussing the proposed changes to ICD-10 on March 9-10. The public is welcome to listen in on this meeting, either in person or online, or you can read the transcripts after the meeting. To learn more, go to this [link](#). It's important to point out that the information presented at this March meeting are the proposed changes, and the final decisions to code revisions have to go through the clearance process within the Department of Health and Human Services. However, attending this meeting will give you an idea of what could be coming and help you to prepare.

Keep Calm and Code On

Now that ICD-10 is here, we can't become complacent. Never, ever stop learning. Consider attending local, regional, state, or national meetings to learn more about upcoming coding changes.

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Original source:
Endicott, Melanie. "Code Cracker: New Year, New Code Set, New Opportunities" (Journal of AHIMA website), January 13, 2016.

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