

ICD-10: Our Red-Letter Day

Save to myBoK

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The first day of school. The day of your wedding. The first day of a new job. Each of these are big, memorable dates that first loom on calendars and then linger long in memory.

For many of us in the HIM profession, October 1, 2013, was a red-letter day too-the original implementation date for the industry to start using ICD-10-CM codes instead of ICD-9-CM codes. For almost three years, we had looked forward to and worked toward this date.

So when we learned early this year that the Department of Health and Human Services would "re-examine" the ICD-10 implementation time frame, it was a surprise to all of us. In April, we learned that HHS has proposed pushing the deadline one year later, to October 1, 2014. Our red-letter day was deferred.

Breathing Room and a Helping Hand

As disappointing as the proposed delay is (a final rule could be issued as early as this month), there's still plenty of work to be done. A successful transition depends on everyone being prepared. For those who were not tracking to meet the 2013 deadline, the extra year gives them a little breathing room to be ready.

It also gives those who were more prepared a chance to assist others. This is a great opportunity for HIM professionals to talk about the benefits of ICD-10 (have you seen our "Ten for 10" talking points?). Whatever your role at your organization, it's also a great time to take a seat at the table and help lead the way. And it's a perfect time to reach out to smaller organizations in your area or to work with your state association to share lessons learned and helpful tips for a successful implementation.

AHIMA Is Here to Help

This issue of the *Journal* brings you three fresh perspectives on the topic. In our cover story, "[ICD-10 Delay Impacts All Sectors of Healthcare](#)," Chris Dimick examines the potential impact of a delay on the industry. In "[Preparing for ICD-10-CM in the Emergency Department](#)," Mary Stanfill drills down into the specifics for preparation in an area of acute care where time and accuracy are of the essence. And finally, as the industry renews its preparation efforts, Dr. Suman De offers best practice guidance on establishing a precise mapping between old and new ICD code sets in "[8 Steps to Success in ICD-10-CM/PCS Mapping](#)."

No matter where you are in implementation, AHIMA is here to help you. Our resources include online courses, e-newsletters and *Journal* articles, audio seminars, and our online toolkits and free web resources. We're publishing new books such as ICD-10 Coder Training Manuals and the updated Clinical Coding Workout, and we have a host of academies, coder training, and ICD-10 Online Training Pathways, which provide the recommended training suited to your role and work setting. Please let us know how these products are helping you and what you'd like to see in the future.

If ICD-10 is delayed, we'll be marking our calendars for October 1, 2014. We know that the implementation day is the beginning, not the end, of the process. There's plenty of work to do post-implementation as well to ensure that we continue to improve quality, reduce costs, and move forward with electronic health records.

We'll still have our red-letter day.

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