
Resource Tool: Professional Services – Outpatient ICD-10 Coding Guidelines

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Please Note: This is not a formal coding directive at this time. This is an informal coding guidance based on the information at the time of the communication. These resource tools will not be regularly reviewed and updated so please refer to the most recent references and resources available.

The intent of this communication is in response to a question.

Question: If I'm coding for a CU Medicine provider seeing hospitalized patients, do I use Inpatient Coding Guidelines?

Answer: No. The Inpatient Coding Guidelines are for use by the facility only. Physicians use the Outpatient guidelines, no matter what the place of service is.

Supporting Documentation:

Coding Clinic, 4th Quarter, 2000, which states in part:

When coding for physician services, whether provided in the hospital inpatient setting or in the physician office, coders should be guided by the Diagnostic Coding and Reporting Guidelines for Outpatient Services (Hospital-Based and Physician Office). The inpatient guidelines are for hospital coding.

Coding Clinic, 1st Quarter, 2014, which states in part:

The Outpatient Guidelines are to be used for all physician services, irrespective of place of service.

For uncertain diagnoses, Coding Services will follow **ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, 2017 edition, Section IV.H Diagnostic Coding and Reporting Guidelines for Outpatient Services of the Official Guidelines for Reporting ICD-10-CM**

H. Uncertain diagnosis: Do not code diagnoses documented as “probable”, “suspected,” “questionable,” “rule out,” or “working diagnosis” or other similar terms indicating uncertainty. Rather, code the condition(s) to the highest degree of certainty for that encounter/visit, such as symptoms, signs, abnormal test results, or other reason for the visit. Please note: This differs from the coding practices used by short-term, acute care, long-term care and psychiatric hospitals.

References

AHA. (2000). Coding Clinic. *Coding Clinic, 4th Quarter*.

AHA. (2014). Coding Clinic. *Coding Clinic, 1st Quarter*.

CMS, NCHS. (FY 2017). *ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, Section IV.H*.