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CMS and AMA Announce Efforts to Help Providers Get Ready For ICD-10

With less than three months remaining until the nation switches from ICD-9 to ICD-10 coding for medical diagnoses and inpatient hospital procedures, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the American Medical Association (AMA) are announcing efforts to continue to help physicians get ready ahead of the October 1 deadline. In response to requests from the provider community, CMS is releasing additional guidance that will allow for flexibility in the claims auditing and quality reporting process as the medical community gains experience using the new ICD- 10 code set.

Recognizing that health care providers need help with the transition, CMS and AMA are working to make sure physicians and other providers are ready ahead of the transition to ICD-10 that will happen on October 1. Reaching out to health care providers all across the country, CMS and AMA will in parallel be educating providers through webinars, on-site training, educational articles and national provider calls to help physicians and other health care providers learn about the updated codes and prepare for the transition.

“As we work to modernize our nation’s health care infrastructure, the coming implementation of ICD-10 will set the stage for better identification of illness and earlier warning signs of epidemics, such as Ebola or flu pandemics.” said Andy Slavitt, Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. “With easy to use tools, a new ICD-10 Ombudsman, and added flexibility in our claims audit and quality reporting process, CMS is committed to working with the physician community to work through this transition.”

“ICD 10 implementation is set to begin on October 1, and it is imperative that physician practices take steps beforehand to be ready,” said AMA President Steven J. Stack, MD. “We appreciate that CMS is adopting policies to ease the transition to ICD-10 in response to physicians’ concerns that inadvertent coding errors or system glitches during the transition to ICD-10 may result in audits, claims denials, and penalties under various Medicare reporting programs. The actions CMS is initiating today can help to mitigate potential problems. We will continue to work with the administration in the weeks and months ahead to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible.”

The International Classification of Diseases, or ICD, is used to standardize codes for medical conditions and procedures. The medical codes America uses for diagnosis and billing have not been updated in more than 35 years and contain outdated, obsolete terms.

The use of ICD-10 should advance public health research and emergency response through detection of disease outbreaks and adverse drug events, as well as support innovative payment models that drive quality of care.

CMS' free help includes the "[Road to 10](#)" aimed specifically at smaller physician practices with primers for clinical documentation, clinical scenarios, and other specialty-specific resources to help with implementation. CMS has also released provider [training videos](#) that offer helpful ICD-10 implementation tips.

The AMA also has a broad range of materials available to help physicians prepare for the October 1 deadline. To learn more and stay apprised on developments, visit [AMA Wire](#).

CMS also detailed its operating plans for the ICD-10 implementation. Upcoming milestones include:

- Setting up an ICD-10 communications and coordination center, learning from best practices of other large technology implementations that will be in place to identify and resolve issues arising from the ICD-10 transition.
- Sending a letter in July to all Medicare fee-for-service providers encouraging ICD-10 readiness and notifying them of these flexibilities.
- Completing the final window of Medicare end-to-end testing for providers this July.
- Offering ongoing Medicare acknowledgement testing for providers through September 30th.
- Providing additional in-person training through the "Road to 10" for small physician practices.
- Hosting an MLN Connects National Provider Call on August 27th.

In accordance with the coming transition, the Medicare claims processing systems will not have the capability to accept ICD-9 codes for dates of services after September 30, 2015, nor will they be able to accept claims for both ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes.

Also, at the request of the AMA, CMS will name a CMS ICD-10 Ombudsman to triage and answer questions about the submission of claims. The ICD-10 Ombudsman will be located at CMS's ICD-10 Coordination Center.

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