

Produced by the ICD-10 Integrated Project Team (IPT) & TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) Information Management (IM)

“It’s All In the Details” - ICD-10 Offers Specificity

Once the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) takes effect on October 1, 2014, more detail in the codes will be available to describe a patient’s health condition. Code assignments will depend on a physicians’ documentation in a medical record in order to take advantage of the increased specificity afforded by ICD-10.

394

Days Remaining to
ICD-10 Conversion

As of 9/1/2013

Use of the most specific ICD-10 codes to depict a patient’s health condition is important for several reasons. For one, Military Treatment Facilities and network providers use these codes to keep track of a patient’s case management and path of treatment. ICD codes are also used by the Military Health System (MHS) to track epidemics, trend illness and disease, and for medical research purposes.

The value of ICD-10 specificity is that it captures information such as:

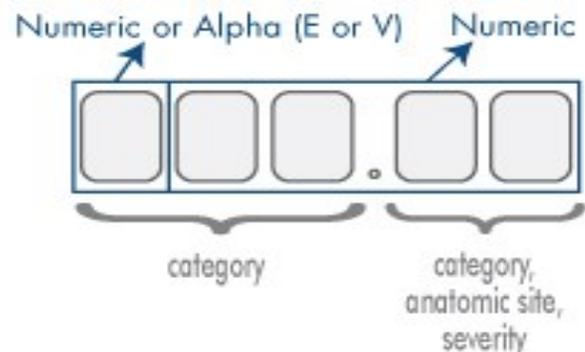
- Laterality (Right, Left, Bilateral, Unilateral)
- Anatomical Locations
- Trimester
- Encounter Type (Initial, Subsequent, Sequela)
- Type Diabetes
- Known complications or comorbidities
- Description of severity, acute or chronic or other known parameters

To achieve even greater detail, more than one ICD-10 code may be required. When appropriate, additional codes may be needed to represent:

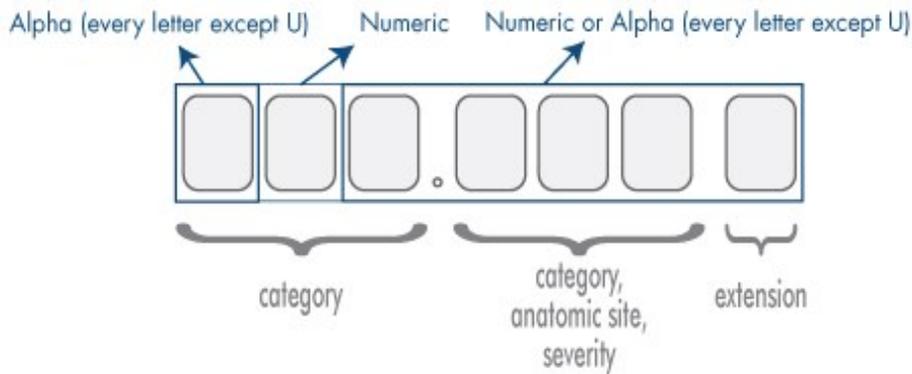
- Causation
- Infectious, chemical, physical or other agents
- Location of Injury
- External causes of injury
- Manifestations
- Comorbid condition or contributing factors
- Sequela
- Findings
- Multiple other factors associated with the primary condition being treated or evaluated

With ICD-10, increased specificity comes at a price, the codes are becoming more complex.

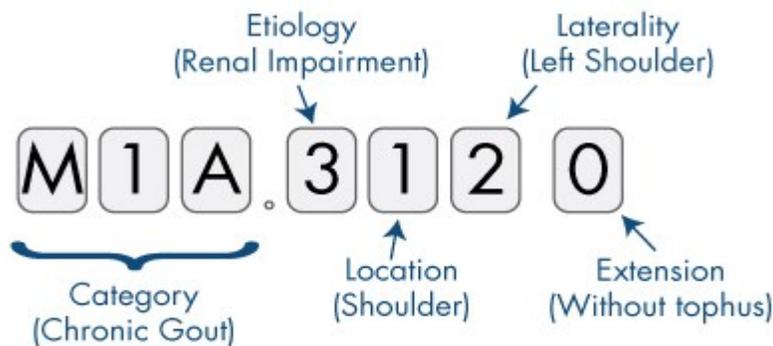
In **ICD-9-Clinical Modification (CM)**, codes are three to five digits. The first digit is either numeric or alpha (the letters E or V only) and all other digits are numeric. ²



In **ICD-10-CM**, diagnosis codes may be as long as seven digits. The first digit is always an alpha (it can be any letter except U), the second digit is always numeric, and the remaining five digits can be any combination.



The following example shows an **ICD-10-CM** code for chronic gout due to renal impairment, left shoulder, without tophus.



The corresponding ICD-9-CM code would have been 274.02 (Chronic gout arthropathy, without mention of tophus). As you can see, the ICD-10-CM code contains much more information.

Unspecified diagnosis codes do not fully define important parameters of the patient condition. One example of an unspecified ICD-10-CM code for otitis media is: H66.90, otitis media, unspecified, unspecified ear. This code is vague and may not justify the level of care provided. Instead, physicians should document laterality (i.e., whether the ear infection is in the left or right ear). Simply stating ear infection is not sufficient.

Another example of an unspecified ICD-10-CM code is J45.90, unspecified asthma; however, this code should be avoided. Instead documentation should indicate whether the asthma is mild, moderate, or severe as well as whether it's intermittent or persistent. This will enable coders to report a more specified option.

One of the identified benefits for the United States' transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10 is the increased level of specificity offered by the ICD-10 code format. This specificity will benefit patients and doctors (by giving more detailed diagnosis and treatment information), payers (by more accurately defining services) and international organizations that monitor worldwide disease.

Within the MHS, a Tri-Service Working Group was established to trend the most commonly used diagnoses across various specialties and conduct ICD-9 to ICD-10 code crosswalks. These crosswalks are references used only for training and will demonstrate to coders how diagnosis specificity is available with ICD-10. After ICD-10 implementation, coding will be done natively, without the use of forward crosswalks.

Source: ^{1,2} - American Academy of Professional Coders

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