ICD-10 Coding of Osteoarthritis

Start with the common things

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With just a few months left before the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) goes into effect, it is time to begin focused, orthopaedic-specific training in earnest.

Under ICD-9, most diagnosis codes used by orthopaedic surgeons were in the musculoskeletal section, and categories were numbers from 710 to 739. Injury and poisoning diagnostic categories, including traumatic fractures, were reported with codes that ranged from 800 to 999.

In ICD-10, most orthopaedic codes will begin with the letters M or S. These codes will be found in Chapter 13 (M00-M99), Diseases of the Musculoskeletal & Connective Tissue, and in Chapter 19 (S00-T88), Injury, Poisoning and Certain Other Consequences of External Causes.

Coding osteoarthritis
The range of codes for osteoarthritis (OA) runs from M15 through M19 (excluding OA of the spine, which is found in the category M47). OA codes, as other codes, are further divided into specific locations, laterality, and types of OA.

For example, M15, Polyosteoarthritic, requires the addition of a fourth character to provide specific details as follows:

- M15.0—Primary generalized (osteo) arthritis
- M15.1—Heberden’s nodes (with arthropy)
- M15.2—Bouchard’s nodes (with arthropathy)
- M15.3—Secondary multiple arthritis
- M15.4—Erosive OA
- M15.5—Other polyosteoarthritis
- M15.9—Other polyosteoarthritis, unspecified, or generalized OA not otherwise specified (NOS)

The term “not otherwise specified (NOS)” in ICD-10 is defined the same way as it was in ICD-9. This notation indicates that the documentation does not provide enough detail to allow the use of a more specific code. This differs from the “other” code, such as M15.8, which refers to the fact that a specific ICD-10 code to describe the “type” of OA documented in the record does not exist.

Coding hip OA
In categories M16 through M18, the fifth character, when required, addresses laterality. For example, when coding hip OA (M16), the fourth character describes the type of hip OA and whether it is bilateral or unilateral, and the fifth character indicates laterality (Table 1). Within the M16 category, specific codes also describe OA due to hip dysplasia and posttraumatic OA; in both cases, a fifth character is required to address the issue of laterality.

Coding knee OA
The architecture of the ICD-10 codes describing OA of the knee under category M17 is similar to that of OA of the hip, minus the section on dysplasia (Table 2). Again, when the condition is unilateral, a fifth character is required to specify which side is affected.

Coding thumb (CMC joint) OA
Category M18 covers OA of the first carpometacarpal (CMC) joint; again, the architecture of the ICD-10 codes follows a similar pattern (Table 3) and will require a fifth character to specify laterality.