Coding Injuries, Poisoning, and External Causes of Morbidity

Introduction

Chapter 19 of the Tabular List of ICD-10-CM describes injuries, poisonings, and other consequences of external causes. Codes range from S00 to T88. This chapter classifies the following:

- Injuries
- Fractures
- Adverse effects, Poisonings, Toxic Effects
- Burns and Corrosions

The following are key guidelines to keep in mind when coding conditions of this system:

Injuries and Fractures

- Separate codes are assigned for each injury except when a combination code is provided.
- When multiple codes are assigned, the code for the most serious injury is sequenced first (as determined by the provider, and based on the treatment).
- The S section provides codes for the various types of injuries related to single body regions. The T section covers injuries to unspecified body regions, as well as poisonings and certain other consequences of external causes.
- Most categories in Chapter 19 have a 7th character requirement, and have three options (with the exception of fractures):
  - A: Initial encounter
  - D: Subsequent encounter
  - S: Sequelae
- Use the initial encounter extension for patients actively receiving treatment for the injury (for example, emergency department encounter, and evaluation and treatment by a new physician).
- Report the subsequent encounter extension for patients receiving routine care for the injury during the healing or recovery phase (for example, cast change or removal, other aftercare and follow-up visits following injury treatment).
Use extension S, sequelae, for complications or conditions that arise as a direct result of an injury, such as scar formation after a burn.

**Adverse effects, Poisoning and Drug Underdosing**

Codes in categories T36 – T65 are combination codes that include substances related to adverse effects, poisonings, toxic effects, and underdosing, as well as the external cause (intent).

- Assign an adverse effect code (for example, T36.0X5-) when the drug was correctly prescribed and properly administered. Use additional codes for all manifestations of adverse effects. Examples of manifestations include tachycardia, delirium, vomiting, kidney failure, or respiratory failure.
- When coding a poisoning or reaction to the improper use of a medication (for example, overdose, wrong substance given or taken in error, wrong route of administration), assign the appropriate code from categories T36 – T50. Poisoning codes also have an associated intent: accidental, intentional self-harm, assault, and undetermined.

- Do not code directly from the Table of Drugs and Chemicals. Always refer to the Tabular List and verify the code.
- Use as many codes to completely describe all the drugs, medicinal, or biological substances.
- Underdosing refers to taking less of a medication than prescribed by a provider or manufacturer instruction. For underdosing, assign the code from categories T36 – T50.
Burns and Corrosions

Burn codes are for thermal burns, except sunburns, that come from a heat source, such as a fire or a hot appliance. They also include burns resulting from electricity and radiation. Corrosions are burns due to chemicals.

The following are some of the guidelines for coding burns and corrosions:

- Burns (T20 – T25) are classified by depth, extent, and agent. Burns are classified by depth as follows:
  - First degree (erythema or redness)
  - Second degree (blistering)
  - Third degree (full-thickness involvement)
- Burns of the eye and internal organs are classified by site, not by degree.
- Sequence the code with the highest degree of burn when more than one burn is present.
- Assign separate codes for each burn site.
- If there are varying degrees of burns on the same site, assign the code for the highest degree burn.
- Use an external cause code to identify the source and intent of the burn or corrosion, as well as the place where it occurred.

External Causes of Morbidity

The codes in the range V01 to Y99 are used to describe external causes of morbidity. These are used as secondary codes to describe how an injury happened or what caused a particular condition, the place of occurrence, and the activity the person was doing at the time of the injury.

- These codes can be used with codes from any other range as well as with Z codes.
- The Index to External Causes is located immediately after the Table of Drugs and Chemicals and before the Tabular Index.
- Locate the code in the Index to External Causes, then verify it in the Tabular List.
- No code from this range should be used unless there is specific documentation.
- Assign as many external codes as necessary.
- The codes contain up to 7 characters.
- Some payers do not recognize or require the use of these codes.
The use of External Cause codes is not mandatory; however, they may be mandatory in certain institutions and/or states. If these codes are used, they should be reported by all coders on a consistent basis.