Characteristics of ICD-10-PCS

Introduction

Although ICD-10-PCS provides an Alphabetic Index and a List of codes (similar to ICD-10-CM), it is still important to understand how the codes are structured. This is best done by looking at the Tables. ICD-10-PCS codes consist of a seven-digit alphanumeric formula. Each character has up to 34 possible values. The digits 0–9 and the letters A–H, J–N, and P–Z may be assigned to each character. The letters O and I are not used to avoid confusion with the numeric digits 0 and 1. The term “procedure” is used to refer to the complete specification of the seven characters.

ICD-10-PCS Code Structure

The following is the structure and example of the ICD-10-PCS code for Percutaneous Endoscopic Resection of the Gallbladder (0FT44ZZ). As you continue to read, you will come to understand the values chosen for each character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Body System</th>
<th>Root Operation</th>
<th>Body Part</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Surgical</td>
<td>Hepatobiliary System &amp; Pancreas</td>
<td>Resection</td>
<td>Gallbladder</td>
<td>Percutaneous Endoscopic</td>
<td>No Device</td>
<td>No Qualifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The seven characters in the code are:

1. Character 1: Section
2. Character 2: Body System
3. Character 3: Root Operation
4. Character 4: Body Part
5. Character 5: Approach
6. Character 6: Device
7. Character 7: Qualifier

**Character 1: Section**

The first character in the code determines the broad procedure category, or section, where the code is found. Examples include Medical and Surgical, Obstetrics, and Placement. In the above example, the value of 0 is for Medical and Surgical since this is a surgical procedure.

**Character 2: Body System**

The Body System character notes the general body system where the procedure is performed. Each body system has a different value, which makes it easy to identify the general region of the procedure. Each of the 16 sections has its own list of body systems. There are 31 general regions. In the example above, the gallbladder falls under the body system indicated by an F - Hepatobiliary System and Pancreas.

**Character 3: Root Operation**

The Root Operation is the objective of the specific procedure. Each section, or first character, has different procedural objectives. In the above example, the root operation is a gallbladder **resection** — cutting out or off, without replacement, all of a body part, represented by a T.
Character 4: Body Part

This is the specific anatomical site where the procedure is performed. The body system is used for general site identification, but the body part is very specific to the procedure site. Body part values may refer to an entire organ (for example, kidneys, thymus), or to specific portions of an organ (for example, liver, right lobe). The body part value for gallbladder is a 4.

Character 5: Approach

The fifth character, Approach, identifies the technique used to reach the procedure site. There are different approaches based upon each section. Approaches can be external, through the skin or mucous membrane, or through an orifice. Seven approaches are listed in the Medical and Surgical Section. The approach in the example is percutaneous endoscopic which is represented by a 4.

Character 6: Device

This character specifies devices that remain in or on the patient’s body after the procedure is completed. Materials incidental to a procedure are not coded. These include sutures, ligatures, clips, and radiological markers. The device character is different for each section. Devices fall into four basic categories:

- Grafts and prostheses
- Implants
- Simple or mechanical appliances
- Electronic appliances

Z is a value used in the ICD-10-PCS system that means no or not applicable to this code. In this case there were no devices left in the body so this character is not applicable and is assigned a Z.

Character 7: Qualifier

A qualifier is an additional attribute of the procedure if applicable. Examples of qualifiers include DIAGNOSTIC or STEREOTACTIC. Qualifier choices vary depending on previous values selected. When there is no qualifier, the seventh character is the letter Z to complete the code structure. As above this is not applicable and is assigned a Z.