

COFFEE & CODING

Tuesday, January 2, 2023

Don't Toss Those Old Code Books Just Yet

Welcome to 2024! After all the preparations, training, and education, are you ready to implement what we learned over the past four months about coding changes?

Here are a couple of the most critical secrets to accurate coding at the beginning of the new year:

First, don't throw away your 2023 code books just yet. Keep them handy on one side of your desk even as you stack the new 2024 code books on the other side.

Second, while you're at it, double-check to ensure your EMR/scrubbers do not delete the 2023 codes while they are uploading the new ones.

There are two reasons why.

For most practices, there are still outstanding claims/money from 2023. This means the books are not closed, and old claims still need to be worked and cleared in the system. They will not accept the new code set.

The other reason to hold on to those old code books is that most of the medical field takes off for the holidays. That means physician charges have not been completely entered for December, or missing charges not entered in the past six months were just caught and need to be entered as well. For these cases, too, you will need the 2023 code set.

For all new charges beginning January 1, 2024, you will need the 2024 code set.

This makes January an especially stressful time of year for coders. They have to watch carefully when the charges come over in the EMR. They must make sure that the correct code set gets applied for the correct dates of service.

Coders should remember, too, that there is only a one-month grace period, after which the old deleted codes in the EMR will no longer be active. This may mean that some of the old codes must either be reactivated or entered manually, especially on claim forms.

Meanwhile, physicians may need to remember that the new codes are in effect and put the correct codes on the claims they are cleaning up. Or they may mistakenly apply old codes to charges accrued after January 1.



You might be surprised (or maybe you won't be) at how often these mistakes happen as practices transition from one year to a new one. And they can be costly. If a 2023 claim goes out with a 2024 code attached to it, payors will deny the claim, and payments will be delayed—and there will be more stress and paperwork for the practice as coders must correct the mistakes.

While keeping two sets of books is a crime for accountants, it's a must for coders in January. As you ring in the new year, watch closely and educate clinical staff as necessary. The more you are aware, the better prepared you are for a smooth transition in the January code exchanges.

**Got a question about E/M coding? We'd love to hear from you.
Submit your questions by emailing us at coders@calmwatersai.com!**



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