ICD-10-CM: Seventh Characters - A, D, S - Initial, Subsequent, Sequela

ICD-10-CM uses seventh characters in some codes to provide additional information. We’re going to look at Chapter 19 of ICD-10-CM which covers injuries, poisonings, and certain other consequences of external causes; code range S00-T88. We are concentrating on 7th characters A, S, D, and S.

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I., A., 5, 7th Characters

Certain ICD-10-CM categories have applicable 7th characters. The application for all codes required for all categories within the code or the notes in the Tabular List instruct. The 7th character must always be the 7th character in the data field. If a code that requires a 7th character is not a character, a placeholder X must be used to fill in the empty characters.

I., C., 19, a. Application of 7th Characters in Chapter 19

Most categories in chapter 19 have a 7th character requirement for each applicable code. Most categories in this chapter have three 7th character values (with the exception of fractures): A, initial encounter, D, subsequent encounter and S, sequela. Categories for traumatic fractures have additional 7th character values. While the patient may be seen by a new or different provider over the course of treatment for an injury, assignment of the 7th character is based on whether the patient is undergoing active treatment and not whether the provider is seeing the patient for the first time.

7th character “A”

7th character “A”, initial encounter is used while the patient is receiving active treatment for the condition. Examples of active treatment are: surgical treatment, emergency department encounter, and evaluation and continuing treatment by the same or a different physician.

Example: Patient is injured while chopping wood for his cottage. The ax slipped and the patient’s left forearm was deeply lacerated. Patient was stabilized at Community Hospital then transferred to University Hospital for definitive care. Both hospitals would use the following code:

- S51.812A Laceration without foreign body of left forearm, initial encounter

Rationale: There was active treatment at both facilities.

7th character “D”

7th character “D” subsequent encounter is used for encounters after the patient has received active treatment of the condition and is receiving routine care for the condition during the healing or recovery phase. Examples of subsequent care are: cast change or removal, an x-ray to check healing status of fracture, removal of external or internal fixation device, medication adjustment, other aftercare and follow up visits following treatment of the injury or condition.

Example: The same patient as above has been discharged from the hospital and is now presenting to the Wound Care Clinic for a bandage change. Wound care Clinic would use the following code:

- S51.812D Laceration without foreign body of left forearm, subsequent encounter

Rationale: Active treatment has ended and routine care has begun.

7th character “S”

7th character “S”, sequela, is for use for complications or conditions that arise as a direct result of a condition, such as scar formation after a burn. The scars are sequela of the burn. When using 7th character “S”, it is important to use both the injury code that precipitated the sequela and the code for the sequela itself. The “S” is added only to the injury code, not the sequela code. The 7th character “S” identifies the injury responsible for the sequela. The specific type of sequela (e.g. scar) is sequenced first, followed by the injury code.

Example: The same patient now presents for scar revision of the left forearm at Community Hospital. Community Hospital would use the following codes:

- L90.5 Scar conditions and fibrosis of skin
- S51.812S Sequela without foreign body of left forearm, sequela

Rationale: The scar being treated is a result of the initial laceration.

Coding Practice Example: Patient presents with right clavewnd due to accident 6 months ago. The patient transected the ulnar nerve at the wrist level... ‘

Coding Practice Example:

- Transected the right ulnar nerve at the wrist level S64.01xS

Final codes:

Patient presents with right clavewnd due to accident 6 months ago. The patient transected the ulnar nerve at the wrist level when he broke a window with his right fist.

- Right clavewnd M21.511
- Transected the right ulnar nerve at the wrist level S64.01xS

What about Long Term Care after an injury?

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I., C., 21., c., 7, Aftercare

The aftercare 2 codes should also not be used for aftercare for injuries. For aftercare of an injury, assign the acute injury code with the appropriate 7th character for subsequent encounter.

- Please see AHA Coding Clinic for ICD-9-CM 4th Q 2012 pp 90-99 for further advice on coding for Long Term Care.

Coding Practice Example: An elderly female fell at home and suffered a closed, displaced, transverse fracture of the left femoral shaft. An ORIF was performed at Community Hospital and the patient is now being admitted to Long Term Care for fracture healing, strengthening, and physical therapy.

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Fracture, traumatic (abduction) (adduction) (separate) (see also Fracture, pathological) T14.8 - Femur, femoral T72.9 - Shaft (lower third) (middle third) (upper third) T72.30 - - transverse (displaced) T72.32

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S72.3 Fracture of shaft of femur

- S51.32 Transverse fracture of shaft of femur S72.32 Closed displaced transverse fracture of shaft of left femur

Final code: S72.322D

Closed, displaced, transverse fracture of the left femoral shaft, subsequent encounter for closed fracture with routine healing S72.322D

Note: The coder must be guided by documentation in the medical record of each individual case to make the correct code selections.