

Insights to Coding and Data Quality

Physician queries: Comply with new AHIMA guidance

by Nancy J. Cervi, RHIT

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), with input from the Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists (ACDIS), has released a practice brief governing physician query practices. Asking physicians for health record clarification can be tricky. Although coders have been responsible for performing this task for many years, Clinical Documentation Improvement (CDI) professionals have joined the effort to help. Recent updates to Guidelines for Achieving a Compliant Query Practice from AHIMA adds to previous AHIMA information adding new rules allowing yes/no queries for more than present on admission (POA), addressing “possible” as a qualifier, and other changes that every coder and CDI profession will need to know.

A lack of accurate or complete documentation can result in nonspecific coding and influence accuracy and reimbursement, and presents potential compliance risks. Learning to formulate an appropriate physician’s query will help to avoid these risks as well as adverse terminations. Also included in this practice brief:

- Querying in general
- Query format
- Query retention
- Query escalation

View this practice brief as well as examples of different forms of queries (open-ended, multiple choice, etc.) on the AHIMA Web site at <<http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/idcplg>>.

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