



**news**

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### **AHIMA Comments on AMA Delegates Vote to Oppose ICD-10-CM**

*ICD-10-CM Needed to Advance U.S. Healthcare*

CHICAGO – November 16, 2011—The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) indicated its disappointment with the American Medical Association’s House of Delegates vote to oppose ICD-10-CM implementation scheduled for completion in October 2013.

“There are countless benefits that will come from the use of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century classification system,” said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, RHIA, FACHE. “We need to move our disease classification system toward international standards and also align it with the Meaningful Use incentive program as well as value-based reimbursement. The provider reimbursement system is moving to payment for quality care and the use of a more contemporary, detailed coding system that will support quality care, public health, and research both nationally and internationally.”

Responding to the concern for the increase in codes associated with the 1990s ICD-10-CM over the 1970s ICD-9-CM and its impact on physicians, AHIMA Director of Coding Policy and Compliance Sue Bowman, RHIA, CCS, noted, AHIMA has demonstrated several times that administrative systems can be easily implemented for most primary practices and that specialty practices will only be using a small number of the codes.

“The classification system is like a dictionary,” said Bowman. “You only use it for the codes that represent the diseases that your practice encounters, which would not be every code in the book.”

Bowman also responded to recent reports chastising the classification system for codes that indicated the source of a disease or medical complication. “The classification system is detailed when detail is needed,” she stated. “But if these more detailed codes

are not used when the physician is usually asked to submit additional information after the claim is filed, that will lead to more work on the part of a medical practice's staff."

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) authorized the United States to finally adopt the ICD-10-CM classification system in early 2009, after a significant public comment period. HHS offices in the Center for Disease and Prevention and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services developed a U.S. version of the international ICD-10 in the late 1990s, but objection from various sources held implementation in abeyance for 10 years.

Bowman noted that at the time of its final adoption some of the various electronic health record incentives were not in existence. However, AHIMA has been working adamantly to ensure that the various HHS requirements are aligned to permit a smooth implementation.

Bowman also stressed that if the ICD-10-CM classification system had been implemented in the late 1990s then the problems created by constant delay would not be experienced today. She indicated that the U.S. classification system has essentially run out of codes and cannot fully express 21<sup>st</sup> Century medical knowledge. "The move to electronic health information and exchange will not benefit the public if we do not also improve the information that these new systems will create and exchange," said Bowman.

AHIMA noted that a slowdown in implementation of an inevitable classification change will greatly add to both the cost of such a delayed implementation and the purchase and implementation of electronic health records and health information exchange, as well as the impact on the many changes occurring in the healthcare industry's implementation of quality-based reimbursement.

### **About AHIMA**

Representing more than 63,000 specially educated Health Information Management professionals in the United States and around the world, the American Health Information Management Association is committed to promoting and advocating for high quality research, best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA's enduring goal is quality healthcare through quality information. [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org)