

It's a Date! ICD-10 Testing -- Let's Finish What We Started

By Juliet A. Santos, MSN, CCRN, FNP-BC, Principal, Leidos Health

We've got a date!

Much of the healthcare industry was shattered on March 31 as Congress announced that through the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 that ICD-10 could not be implemented before Oct. 1, 2015. It looked dismal ... as though all hope was lost for a time, not knowing whether ICD-10 is coming or going.

Doubts, skepticism, confusion and frustration seemed to initially overwhelm many who have spent millions while aiming for what seemed to be an ever-moving go-live target. On the other hand, a few rejoiced that alas, ICD-10 will be sunset for a time or perhaps, maybe, hopefully -- forever. However, as the drama unfolded, it was evident that the majority made good use of the additional grace period by focusing on fine-tuning their ICD-10 testing and other preparation efforts.

Now that CMS has issued the Final Rule of Oct. 1, 2015 as the ICD-10 implementation date, organizations are once again rekindling the energy that drove their ICD-10 team to accomplish great feats that have never been attempted before. This time, everyone is focused on a solitary goal---to finish an incomplete federal mandate ... the conversion to ICD-10 in an effort to tie up loose ends and deliver success to their organization. We must bring our coding system up to par with the current practice of medicine with little revenue impact and minimal operational disruption.

As you glance briefly at the refresher below, remember that "ICD-10 is making testing experts out of all of us." Prior to ICD-10, the healthcare industry really didn't know how to test comprehensively. After ICD-10, each organization will have a centralized testing center capable of transcending ICD-10.

How do you do this? Document your process well, develop a comprehensive, repeatable process and plan, continually improve and transform your previous basic, ground floor "testing into a science" that lives on and will benefit other implementations initiatives beyond ICD-10. Don't be afraid to try new concepts, processes and approaches. Expand your current testing team to include others that will help your tests be more robust and thorough.

Testing Refresher:

- ▶ Develop an ICD-10 test strategy
- ▶ Be as granular as possible when crafting ICD-10 test plans -- test for the requirements
- ▶ Testing should involve all impacted applications, interfaces, systems, processes, reimbursements, payers, and people

- ▶ Create detailed test scenarios and test scripts to account for high-volume and high-dollar services, complex patient visits/account types (with patient transfers, holds, multiple service locations and departments involved)
- ▶ Attempt to finish all upgrades and initial remediation by Dec. 2014 or sooner
- ▶ Allocate 2015 to finalize testing activities
- ▶ Ensure adequate IT staff allocation for preparing systems for the ICD-10 conversion --test with end-users in User Acceptance Testing
- ▶ Limit the number of IT projects unrelated to ICD-10 until after Oct. 1, 2015 as much as possible -- keep ICD-10 as a priority
- ▶ Simplify conflicting projects that cannot be avoided
- ▶ Determine your vendors' state of readiness and your level of risk -- develop Plan A, B, or C contingency plans if products and services will not be ready in time

Additionally, check to make sure that the following basics are tested and included in your test strategy and test plan:

- ▶ Patient scheduling
- ▶ Patient registration
- ▶ Medical necessity process
- ▶ Provider documentation templates if implemented
- ▶ Clinical documentation improvement and query applications/management tools
- ▶ Order sets
- ▶ Charge master
- ▶ Encoder with dual ICD-9/ICD-10 environments
- ▶ Clinical decision support
- ▶ Computer assisted coding with NLP
- ▶ Speech recognition with NLP
- ▶ Referral management systems
- ▶ Claims submission/clearinghouse
- ▶ Patient billing
- ▶ Payment and adjustment processing
- ▶ Denials management
- ▶ Contract management
- ▶ Business/clinical intelligence applications
- ▶ State and federal reporting systems

Keep ICD-10 moving and do whatever is necessary to cross the finish line. ICD-10 will be one of the very basic foundations that prepare the U.S. healthcare system for the next level in the practice of medicine. Now that we have a date, let's finish what we started.

About the Author

Juliet Santos is the ICD-10 Principal Consultant for Leidos Health. Santos formerly was EVP of Lott QA Group and assisted with the creation of the ICD-10 PlayBook, ICD-10 National Pilot Program and the ICD-10 National Testing Platform. Email her at Juliet.Santos@leidoshealth.com.

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