



## Neurosurgery Coding Alert

### ICD-10 Update: Get Ready to Makeover Your Skull Base Fracture Coding

**You can bank upon the side of fracture and initial encounters to find the right code.**

Fractures in the skull base are complex to treat yet simple to report. You can adopt an easy stepwise approach to find the correct diagnosis code for skull base fractures. Make sure you have checked for the following before you can finalise the diagnosis code for skull base fractures:

**Tip:** For subsequent encounters in skull base fractures, you need to check if the encounter was for routine or delayed healing or a non-union of the fracture. "Reporting of the delayed and non-union diagnostic codes is most likely going to be associated with complications of the skull based fracture such as delayed cerebrospinal fluid leak," says **Gregory Przybylski, MD**, director of neurosurgery at the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute, JFK Medical Center in Edison. **Do Not Ignore Unspecified Side** When your surgeon does not specify the side for the initial encounter for skull base fracture, you submit code S02.109A (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, initial encounter for closed fracture) for closed fractures and code S02.109B (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, initial encounter for open fracture) for open fractures. For subsequent encounters, you can choose from codes S02.109D (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, subsequent encounter for fracture with routine healing), S02.109G (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, subsequent encounter for fracture with delayed healing) and S02.109K (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, subsequent encounter for fracture with non-union) for routine and delayed healing and non-union. **Look For Sequelae to Skull Base Fracture** If your physician documents that the patient developed deficits or neurological damage subsequent to the skull base fracture, you submit code S02.101S (Fracture of base of skull, right side, sequela) for the right sided fractures and code S02.102S (Fracture of base of skull, left side, sequela) for the left sided fractures. When your surgeon does not specify the side, you submit code S02.109S (Fracture of base of skull, unspecified side, sequela). "Possible sequelae that may prompt reporting of these diagnostic codes include CSF leak, infection and cranial nerve palsies," Przybylski says. **Make note:** Table 2 lists skull base fracture codes that have been deleted. Remember to strike them off your coding database. 