Home Health Line Tool

Query scenario practice to avoid rejections

Below is an example of a referral that lacks essential information needed to identify the appropriate PDGM-approved diagnosis. The query example shows how to query for more information to avoid rejected claims.

Scenario:

Home health nursing and physical therapy is ordered for Carl Jones for increased shortness of breath (SOB). An encounter note is also provided from an office visit three weeks ago. The encounter note includes a review of patient's COPD and congestive heart failure (CHF) with changes to patient's Lasix dose and a new inhaler ordered. Patient complains of lower back pain and the caregiver shares the patient does not want to get up and move around as much. Patient's past medical history lists lumbosacral stenosis, anxiety, history of UTIs. The comprehensive assessment completed by the clinician documents that the patient complains of weakness, experiences SOB with minimal activity and has severe back pain whenever he tries to get up. The coder reviews the physician documentation and the comprehensive assessment. It is determined that the patient has many conditions that have the potential to cause SOB, however, the physician does not link/document it to a specific condition. The coder, therefore, must send a query to the physician. The coder fills out the template, making sure nonleading and open ended questions are used.

Query example:

Dr. Eschenroeder,

You referred Carl Jones to home health for increased SOB. The patient was seen in your office on 4/1/24 for COPD, CHF and complaints of increased lower back pain. Lasix dose was changed from being taken as needed for weight gain to 20 mg daily and a Fluticasone inhaler was ordered twice per day.

Assessment findings/Clinical details:

- SOB with minimal activity
- Increased dry cough
- Lungs diminished but clear
- Daily weight tracking revealed a weight gain of 3 pounds in the last 7 days
- +1 bilateral pedal edema
- Lower back pain rated on 0-10 pain scale: current = 5; worst in last 24 hrs = 7; best in last 24 hrs = 2

Please document the cause of patient's SOB for this home health referral below:

___ COPD

___ CHF

___ *Other condition (please specify)* _____

Provider signature _____ **Date** _____

Following the query creation:

- The query is sent to the physician. The physician completed and signed the form indicating patient's CHF is the underlying condition for SOB. The physician specified heart failure as chronic systolic heart failure.

- The coder uploads the document in the patient's medical record and assigns **I50.22** (Chronic systolic (congestive) heart failure) as the primary diagnosis. — *Megan Herr (megan.herr@decisionhealth.com)*

Editor's note: The example query scenario was provided by Karen Tibbs, director of quality with McBee Associates of Wayne, Pa.