



UEI Coding Alert # 6

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Improving Your Diagnosis Coding

What if a patient presents with a complaint or a symptom, but no conclusive diagnosis is made?

It is common to see an assessment that reads, "Probable, suspect, rule out, or undefined disorder." Claim submission requires a diagnosis code; however, no such codes exist to describe a probable condition or "rule out status".

The introduction to the ICD9 manual addresses this issue by stating, "Diagnoses documented as 'probable', 'suspect', 'questionable', or 'rule out', should not be coded as if the diagnosis is confirmed, instead code the highest degree of certainty describing symptoms, signs, abnormal test results, or other reasons for the encounter". Codes that describe symptoms as opposed to diagnoses are acceptable if this is the highest level of certainty documented by the doctor.

Code the symptoms if you can not make a definitive diagnosis.