Lymphoma: Documentation drives correct coding

Lymphoma is a cancer that starts in cells called lymphocytes, which are part of the body's immune system. Lymphocytes are in the lymph nodes and other lymphoid tissues (such as the spleen, bone marrow, and other organs including the skin). Thus, lymphomas may originate in any lymphoid tissue throughout the body and may not necessarily be restricted to lymph nodes or glands. The two main types of lymphomas are Hodgkin lymphoma and Non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Reviewing the Record
Lymphoma is a systemic disease that does not metastasize the same way that solid tumors do. Therefore, it is incorrect to interpret lymphoma as a secondary malignancy even when documentation supports that multiple sites are involved. The most common signs and symptoms associated with lymphoma include swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck, armpit, or groin; fever; unexplained weight loss; night sweats; chills; fatigue; itching; and abdominal pain/swelling. To diagnose lymphoma, the physician may examine the lymph nodes to check for swelling/lumps, take blood/urine samples to rule out other infections, order a CT scan/MRI, or order a lymph node/bone marrow biopsy. Treatment depends on the type of lymphoma, stage of the disease, and the speed of growth. Treatment may involve chemotherapy, radiation or biologic therapy, radio-immunotherapy, stem-cell transplantation, or bone marrow transplantation.

Coding the Record
Per AHA Coding Clinic, 1992, Q2, “Lymphomas are classified in categories 200--202, depending upon the type of the lymphoma, with fifth digit subclassifications for the site(s) involved... Lymphoma patients who are in remission are still considered to have lymphoma and should be assigned the appropriate code from categories 200--202.” Correct coding for lymphoma is dependent on the physician documentation in the medical record and application of the Official ICD-9 Coding Guidelines. Lymphoma does not follow the typical excision procedures often used to remove solid tumors. Therefore, documentation must state if the condition is currently ongoing, in remission, or historically resolved.

ICD-10 Mapping
ICD-10 expands on the categories of lymphoma. Correct coding will rely heavily on detailed documentation to accurately assign the codes in ICD-10 categories C81 to C88.

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<th>ICD-9 Codes</th>
<th>ICD-10 Mapping</th>
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<tr>
<td>200-202</td>
<td>C81 – C88 All Hodgkin and Non-Hodgkin type lymphomas</td>
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Resources:
http://www.fortherecordmag.com/archives/12061op27.shtml
http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hodgkins-lymphoma/basics/definition/con-20030667