

ICD-10 CODING DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

ACTIVE VERSUS HISTORY OF CANCER

MVP Health Care realizes that documenting and coding for cancer can be a challenge for both the provider of service documenting a patient visit and for the coding staff coding from the documentation. Often, there is confusion about when to code for “active cancer” vs. “history of cancer.” This issue is most frequently caused by the improper use of the “copy and paste” function within electronic medical records.

In order for a cancer diagnosis to be accurately coded, the medical documentation must clearly state whether the cancer is a current and active condition or if it is a past condition that has been excised or eradicated with no further treatment needed.

Correct documentation requires that the office note clearly indicate:

- If the cancer is present and being actively managed or treated
- If the cancer has been eradicated or excised
- If there is evidence of recurrence
- What treatment is being used to manage the active cancer

ICD-10 coding guidelines state that it is appropriate to use “history of” when the condition is resolved, cured, and/or gone. Many providers add cancer diagnoses to their Past Medical History tabs in their electronic medical records erroneously when the cancer is currently being treated and considered active. This is an incorrect way to add a current diagnosis. If they then correctly add the current diagnosis code to their treatment plan, this would ultimately present a conflict within the record, as would an inactive cancer diagnosis added to their treatment plan with a current diagnosis code. See the below documentation example:

- Do not use “history of” for patients with prior breast/prostate CA and currently on adjuvant therapy. Suggested documentation:
 - **Replace:** *“History of breast cancer, no recurrence, continue current Tamoxifen treatment.”*
 - **With:** *“Breast cancers, no recurrence, continue current Tamoxifen treatment.”*

If you have any questions with respect to this notice, please contact your Professional Relations Representative.

