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Welcome to the June issue of Maxim Coding CornerSM, brought you by [Maxim Health Information Services](#)! This month, we are focusing on defining two important (but often misunderstood) terms: NOS and NEC Diagnostic Coding. Read on to learn key facts about these two codes.

Not Otherwise Specified (NOS) Defined

- The term “NOS” is used to indicate that the code is unspecified and the coder should continue looking for a more specific code. The coder should always refer to the ICD-9-CM Tabular List and review titles and inclusion terms to determine if there is a more specific code.
- Codes that describe “not otherwise specified” conditions are assigned only when the diagnostic statement, as well as the health record, does not provide enough information.
- In certain cases, this code will not be on the medical necessity listing from the payer, and if used, will cause a denial of the case.

NOS Example

A provider note indicates that the patient has otitis media. Code 382.9, unspecified otitis media, becomes the appropriate code if the diagnostic statement or record lacks the additional information, such as “purulent” or “serous.”

Not Elsewhere Classified (NEC) Defined

The term “NEC” identifies codes and terms to be used in two instances:

- 1) With ill-defined terms
- 2) With terms for which a more specific code is not available, even though the diagnostic statement is very specific

NEC Example:

008.67 Enteritis due to Enterovirus NEC (Coxsackie virus, echovirus; excludes poliovirus). In this example, this code would be reported even if a specific enterovirus such as echovirus had been identified, because ICD-9-CM does not provide a specific code for that condition.

Basic Rule for NOS and NEC

The general rule in using codes listed as NOS or NEC is that if

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you can find a more specific code from the Physician documentation that fits the diagnosis, use that instead. Payers are hesitant to reimburse based on medical necessity for those codes listed as NEC and NOS, so it is best to find an alternate code if possible.

To learn more about Maxim Health Information Services and NOS and NEC, visit us [online](#) or call 866-265-0589