

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Title: Introduction of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Classification of Surgical Operations and Procedures (OPCS) version 4.4 and corresponding Healthcare Resource Grouper

For Action by:

Chief Executives: NHS Trusts
Health Solutions Wales

Action required:

See paragraphs 21 - 24

For Information to: Local Health Boards, Trust Medical Directors, Trust Information Directors, National Public Health Service, Health Commission Wales, Business Services Centre, Health Statistics and Analysis Unit

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Enclosure(s): None

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Dear Colleague,

Summary

1. NHS Wales currently utilises the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Classification of Surgical Operations and Procedures (OPCS) version 4.3 introduced by WHC (2006) 014. Implementation of this version was phased over 2006-07 and is now complete.
2. The Healthcare Resource Grouper (HRG) compatible with OPCS4.3 is HRG3.5 v2006.2.1 which was implemented in October 2006. This version of the HRG grouper is still based on HRG3.5, the main difference being the management of the new OPCS codes in the grouping process.
3. OPCS4.4 has been developed as an updated classification, which has been implemented across UK Countries as a maintenance release, from April 2007.
4. This circular advises that OPCS4.4 is to be introduced in NHS Wales effective October 1st 2007, with the corresponding compatible Healthcare Resource Grouper HRG3.5 v2007.1.0.
5. The corresponding Data Set Change Notice related to this circular is DSCN (2007) 14 (W).
6. There is no requirement to retrospectively re-group from April 2007 to September 2007 using HRG3.5 2007.1.0, however if Trusts choose to do so, this is acceptable. If a Trust elects to undertake retrospective re-grouping, all such activity data should be re-submitted to the national database.

Background

7. OPCS4.3 was introduced in 2006-07 and represented a significant upgrade to the classification system, which had not changed since 1990. This led to a 25% increase in the codes available to be allocated to inpatient, day case and outpatient records.
8. It is important to maintain compatibility with other UK countries, particularly England, due to cross border patient and information flows. Hence NHS Wales agreed to the principle of implementing updates to the classification system as they became available.
9. A further, maintenance, release of OPCS was issued by NHS England, called version 4.4. This represents a much smaller increase of 3% of codes (i.e. 241 new codes) which can be implemented relatively easily without the need for specialist training, or an undue overhead on I.T. systems.
10. OPCS4.4 Reference Manuals have already been circulated to the Service in anticipation of the introduction of this release.
11. Healthcare Resource Grouper3.5 has been updated to take account of the new OPCS codes within v4.3 and v4.4. This is now released as HRG3.5 v2007.1.0. The effect of HRG3.5 v2007.1.0 is to map the new OPCS4.3 and 4.4 codes back to the nearest OPCS4.2 equivalent to generate an HRG code.

12. It should be noted that data submitted to Health Solutions Wales from November 2007, will have a derived HRG generated using HRG3.5 v2007.1.0. The data processing routines for PEDW do not use the episode end date to apply different versions of the HRG3.5 grouper. Therefore any data submitted after November 1st 2007, for episodes ending before or after October 1st 2007, will have a derived HRG code generated using HRG3.5 v2007.1.0.
13. As the HRG3.5v2007.1.0 is only a maintenance release to accommodate OPCS4.4, together with a bug-fix in the handling of Radiotherapy treatments, it is not considered to be a significant update necessitating delay till the new financial year. The benefits of updating to OPCS4.4 and corresponding HRG grouper outweigh any potential differences occurring in the submitted and derived HRG codes.
14. Upgrades to OPCS have been developed to support HRG4 grouping. However a policy decision on future versions of grouping software to be used in NHS Wales has not yet been made.

Benefits

15. There is a greater breadth of chemotherapy regimes.
16. There are new codes for common arthroscopic procedures which remove the need to assign two codes for such procedures.
17. There are 207 refinements to existing codes and descriptions to clarify meaning or provide new includes, excludes, notes etc. as well as improvements to sequencing notes.
18. The Index has been improved, doubling the list of surgical abbreviations, including a High Cost Drugs new section and the inclusion of some new anti-viral drugs.
19. Context-specificity has been removed which will enable Trusts to properly code procedures and certain high-cost drugs in whatever setting is appropriate.
20. Adoption of OPCS4.4 in Wales will enable Clinical Coders to have operational experience of using this version prior to taking Coding Qualification exams requiring knowledge of the latest version.

Actions required

21. NHS Trusts are to update their I.T. systems so that OPCS4.4 and HRG3.5 v2007.1.0 are implemented effective October 1st 2007.
22. NHS Trusts to ensure that data submitted to the Patient Episode Database for Wales (PEDW) and the national Outpatient activity database for activity from October 1st 2007 is compatible with these version updates.
23. NHS Trust Clinical Coding staff are expected to liaise with clinicians and pharmacy colleagues with regard to the introduction and utilisation of any new or amended OPCS4.4 codes.

24. Health Solutions Wales to:
- a) ensure that the data collection, validation and central generation of derived HRG codes are compatible with the version updates, effective October 1st 2007.
 - b) Ensure training materials for the Basic Training Courses are in line with England and are adopted in Wales once the decision has been made to implement OPCS 4.4.
 - c) Ensure that existing and new specialist training materials are updated to reflect changes made from OPCS 4.4
 - d) Arrange distribution of new manuals

Clearance

- 25. The introduction of this new release of OPCS has been approved by the Welsh Information Governance and Standards Board.
- 26. This circular has been drafted in collaboration with the National Assembly's Directorate of Resources of the Health and Social Care Department.

Queries

- 27. Policy enquiries should be directed to Dr Sally Greenway, Information Services Division. Information / reporting enquiries should be directed to Heidi Rosenberg at Health Solutions Wales. Contact details of both are shown on the front of this circular.

Yours sincerely



Gordon McKenzie
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Department for Health and Social Services