American Red Cross

Reimbursement Update: LOINC Codes

LOINC Codes

The American Red Cross has been receiving ever more inquiries from customers regarding LOINC codes. LOINC (Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes) was developed to provide a definitive standard for identifying clinical information in electronic reports.

The impact on hospitals: LOINC does not affect billing or reimbursement for blood products or related services; it plays a role in CMS's electronic health records (EHR) program, and that's why some hospital blood banks have started to ask about it. However, because LOINC was originally developed as a means for communicating laboratory test results, and because many labs do not consistently use LOINC, the system does not perfectly capture all of the blood products or blood-related services offered by the Red Cross.

Informational resources: There is a spreadsheet posted with this update (Complete List of Blood Bank Loinc Codes 06-30-2014.xlxs) that contains a complete list of all of the blood bank-related codes currently listed in the LOINC database, as well as the LOINC Users' Guide (LOINCManual.pdf), which explains what the different fields in the spreadsheet represent. It is important to note that out of the 70,000+ codes in the LOINC database, less than 1,000 are blood bank codes, which suggests that blood banking is not a main focus of LOINC.

A second spreadsheet (Top Blood Bank Loinc Codes 01-2014.xlxs) contains a much shorter list of the most common blood bank-related codes. This list is taken from the top 2,000 LOINC codes, which represent the vast majority of tests performed/ordered by laboratories. (Again, only a very small percentage of the top codes are blood bank codes.)

The information in the spreadsheets that accompany this update comes from the Regenstrief Institute, which is the organization that developed and maintains the LOINC system. Regenstrief also provides an **online look up tool** which can be used to look up individual tests and services. For example, if one navigates to the look up tool and enters "crossmatch" in the search field, this will pull up all of the LOINC codes related to crossmatching. Users may need to register to use this resource, but registration is free.

The **LOINC website** also provides a lot of other information related to LOINC, such as downloadable files, a FAQ, and tutorials.

Finally, this **third-party website** provides a good high-level overview of LOINC and its role in EHR, as well as links to other resources.

More information on billing for blood products and related services can be found on our website at redcrossblood.org/reimbursement

Please send reimbursement inquiries or requests for reimbursement assistance to reimburse@redcross.org