This core international curriculum describes entry-level requirements. Its purpose is to provide a basis for education for all countries.

Availability of resource materials and essential references needed for coding
- Full set of ICD-10 (Tabular List, Instructions, and Index) (current edition as updated by WHO)
- Periodic official WHO updates to ICD-10
- Medical dictionary
- Training materials relevant to core curriculum
- Drug references
- Abbreviation list
- Contact person to ask questions

1. Knowledge of basic medical science
   Intent: To develop an understanding of medical terminology that will be encountered in cause of death statements, the structure and function of the human body and the nature of disease
   - Medical terminology (A study of common medical terms related to major disease processes.)
   - Basic anatomy (A study of the structure of the human body utilizing a system approach.)
   - Basic physiology (A study of the functions affecting the human body.)
   - Concept of etiology and risk factors
   - Basic pathology (A study of the causes and nature and effects of diseases.)

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
- spell and define medical terms as well as explain the concepts of root/suffix/prefix word builds
- identify the normal structure and function of all human body systems
- name the typical causes, diagnosis, and treatment of common diseases
- define the concept of etiology and its relationship to risk factors
- state the nature and course of alterations in structure produced by etiological agents and mechanisms of the body

2. Legal/Ethical issues relevant to the country in which coding is being done
   Intent: To introduce legal and ethical issues applicable to health information, its collection and release.
   - Privacy and confidentiality principles (see appended proposed principles)
     - Use of person-identifiable information
     - Adherence to relevant laws and regulations
     - Access to person-identifiable information
• Release of information
• Professional ethics

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
• apply policies and procedures for access and disclosure of personal health information
• utilize current laws and regulations related to health information initiatives
• release patient-specific data to authorized users
• practice and promote ethical standards of practice

3. General uses of underlying cause of death data
*Intent: To explain the purposes for which underlying cause of death data are collected and how they are used.*

• Context in which coding is done
• Purposes for coding
• Statistical outputs
• Evidence for health policy
• Planning and evaluating health services and programs
• Medical and public health research
• Clinical education

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
• list the common reasons underlying cause data are collected
• describe the general uses of underlying cause of death data

4. Specific uses of underlying cause of death data
*Intent: To introduce the specific uses of coded mortality data*

• Health situation and trend analysis
  o Leading causes of death
  o Definition of policies and priorities
  o Planning health programs and services
  o Health indicators
  o Trend analyses
  o A critical element to identify:
    ▪ Public health problems
    ▪ Groups at risk
    ▪ Needs of medical and sanitary research

• Epidemiological surveillance (all listed causes)
  o First or main source of information for certain diseases
  o At local level, investigation of cases, disease control measures
  o Specific population groups/problems (e.g., maternal and infant mortality, adolescents, elderly)

• Evaluation in health
  o Quality of care
  o Outcomes of specific programs
o Different technologies

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
• enumerate specific uses for underlying cause of death data

5. Users of mortality data

*Intent: To explain the different groups and stakeholders who are users of mortality data.*

• Epidemiologists
• Statisticians
• Program managers
• Actuaries
• Policy makers
• Researchers
• Demographers
• Educators and students
• International organizations (World Health Organization, United Nations)

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
• name specific users of underlying cause of death data

6. Sources of Mortality Data

*Intent: To explain the roles of the different persons responsible for reporting data on the deceased and the sources of that data.*

• Providers of data (e.g., medical officers, coroners, medical examiners, funeral directors, and other informants)
• Source documents (e.g., death certificates, police reports, coroner reports, and other reports)

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
• state the various roles of the individuals reporting data on the deceased
• relate the provider of data with the source
• verify completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of data and data sources

7. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

*Intent: To develop an understanding of the ICD and to develop the knowledge and skills that are necessary to assign valid codes for causes of death.*

• Nomenclature and Classification
• International context
  o WHO Family of International Classifications
    ▪ Reference Classifications (ICD and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health [ICF])
    ▪ Derived and related classifications
• Standardization and comparability
• History of the classification
• Structure of classification
• Updating mechanisms of classification

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
  • distinguish a nomenclature from a classification
  • describe the WHO Family of International Classifications and their relationships to each other
  • discuss the history of the classification
  • state the structure of the classification
  • explain the classification’s update process

8. How to code

*Intent: to provide detailed instruction and experience on how to apply the coding rules and assign codes.*
  • How to use different volumes of the ICD
  • Concept of underlying cause of death
    o Definition
    o International format of medical certificate of cause of death
  • Rules, instructions and conventions for coding underlying cause of death
  • Appropriate exercises in selection and coding

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
  • apply diagnosis codes using ICD-10
  • adhere to current established guidelines in code assignment

9. Quality Assurance

*Intent: To raise awareness about the various factors that influence the quality of coded data and describe techniques for assuring the highest quality data possible.*
  • Quality of source documents
  • Querying processes (e.g., sequencing on certificate, what and how to query)
  • Editing and validation
  • Timeliness, completeness and accuracy
  • Responsibility for data quality
  • Processes for accessing expert advice

At the conclusion of this module, the coder should be able to:
  • conduct analysis to ensure documentation in the record supports the diagnosis
  • validate coding accuracy using clinical information found on certificates
  • resolve discrepancies between coded data and supporting documentation

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