Correct Reporting of Electronic Cigarette Use

According to the US National Library of Medicine, electronic cigarettes (or e-cigarettes) are battery-operated smoking devices. Using an e-cigarette is referred to as “vaping” because when the user puffs on the mouthpiece, a vaporizer heats the liquid inside the cartridge and the resulting vapor is inhaled. The liquid in the cartridge typically consists of nicotine, flavorings and other chemicals. The NLM lists the following dangers of e-cigarettes:

- They contain nicotine, which is addictive
- They contain other potentially harmful chemicals
- There is a link between e-cigarette use and tobacco cigarette use in teens
- The liquid in e-cigarettes can cause nicotine poisoning if someone drinks, sniffs or touches it

https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ecigarettes.html

There are two (2) types of electronic cigarettes, and coding will vary based on whether the e-cigarette contains nicotine or is nicotine-free.

1. When the patient is using e-cigarettes that contain nicotine, the physician should document that the patient is nicotine-dependent, using electronic cigarettes. To locate the correct ICD-10-CM diagnosis code use main term Dependence in the Alphabetic Index. Subterms Drug, Nicotine, Specified Product lead the coder to F17.290 (Nicotine dependence, other tobacco product, uncomplicated).

   There are other codes for e-cigarette use in remission (F17.291), with withdrawal (F17.293) and with other nicotine-induced disorders (F17.298). The correct code for the individual patient will be selected based on physician documentation in the medical record.

2. If the medical record states that the patient is using a non-nicotine e-cigarette, there is no ICD-10-CM code to report. Because the chemicals in a non-nicotine electronic cigarette are currently listed as “potentially harmful,” the coder would only report a poisoning, drug use or other code when the physician specifically lists the harmful nature of the chemical(s) or adverse outcome of patient contact.

   If the physician documents a personal history of nicotine use this would be reported with ICD-10-CM code Z87.891 (Personal history of nicotine dependence). This situation may occur when the patient is utilizing a non-nicotine e-cigarette in an effort to stop using tobacco products.