



Bureau of Public Health Statistics
Arizona Department of Health Services

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Janice K. Brewer, Governor
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To: All Users of Public Release Arizona Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data

From: Donna Courtney, Hospital Data Manager, Bureau of Public Health Statistics

Subject: Issues affecting Arizona 2008-02 Inpatient data

For discharges January 1, 2008 and later, there was a major revision to the Arizona Data Reporting Requirements. The first six months of data reporting under the new requirements was a learning experience for both the reporting hospitals and this agency.

During the collection of the first six months of 2008 data, one of the most problematic data elements was Patient Reason for Visit. We found that a significant number of hospitals could not report the Patient Reason for Visit on inpatient records, because they did not have the information. Further investigation revealed that at many hospitals there was no place in the hospital information management system to house this information for an inpatient record. Finally, we identified that among the hospitals that had reported the element, the contents were (in most cases) simply a programmatically inserted replication of the Admitting or Principal diagnosis, and therefore of no value.

As a result, for inpatient discharges July 1, 2008 and later, the Patient Reason for Visit is no longer a reportable data element on inpatient records. In the 2008-02 inpatient data set, this data element may be still be populated at some hospitals. We anticipate that in 2009-01, this data element will be blank in all inpatient records.

Since 2004, the Arizona Department of Health Services has used various auditing methods on the discharge data with the goal of improving the quality of the data. This included audits on the physician information, due to an awareness that physician data is valuable to our commercial data purchasers.

Unfortunately, commencing with discharges July 1, 2008 and later, the auditing of physician information in the discharge data has been temporarily scaled back. Please be aware that this may result in a higher volume of questionable physician information than in previous years' data sets. The Department will again fully audit physician data at some time in the future; however, it is not possible to state when this will occur.

Please contact our office with any questions or concerns.