Clarification of Primary Brain Surgery Codes

Background: Back in June 2008, the CoC took steps to correct the widespread misinterpretation of the FORDS Primary Brain Surgery codes. The problematic codes are discussed below with coding clarifications provided. Registries that have NOT applied these codes correctly or consistently were advised by the CoC to review their brain surgery cases with primary site surgery codes of 40 or 55 diagnosed since FORDS was implemented in 2003, and make any necessary corrections.

CODES 20-30 are coded for the resection of a tumor, lesion or mass within the brain.

- MOST PRIMARY BRAIN SURGERY SHOULD BE CODED USING THESE CODES
- A subtotal/partial resection of ONLY the brain tumor, lesion or mass is coded to 21
- A gross total resection of ONLY the brain tumor, lesion or mass is coded to 30
- If all you know is that the brain tumor, lesion or mass was removed (i.e. unknown if tumor, lesion or mass was completely removed), it should be coded to 20

CODES 40 & 55 are coded ONLY when a PARTIAL OR COMPLETE LOBECTOMY OF THE BRAIN is performed to remove the tumor, lesion or mass.

- THIS IS A RARE OCCURRENCE and should be verified by careful review of the “GROSS” section of the pathology report or the operative report