Q: I recently heard that some organizations announced changes in terminology with regard to decubitus/pressure ulcers. Do these changes impact on the RAI Manual/MDS Coding required by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)?

A: The National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (NPUAP) recently announced changes in terminology from pressure ulcer to pressure injury and updated the stages of pressure injury (click here). The term “pressure injury” replaces “pressure ulcer” in the National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel Pressure Injury Staging System according to the NPUAP. The change in terminology more accurately describes pressure injuries to both intact and ulcerated skin. In the previous staging system Stage 1 and Deep Tissue Injury described injured intact skin, while the other stages described open ulcers. This led to confusion because the definitions for each of the stages referred to the injuries as “pressure ulcers.”

In addition to the change in terminology, Arabic numbers are now used in the names of the stages instead of Roman numerals. The term “suspected” has been removed from the Deep Tissue Injury diagnostic label. Additional pressure injury definitions agreed upon at the meeting included Medical Device Related Pressure Injury and Mucosal Membrane Pressure Injury.

The updated staging definitions were presented at a meeting of over 400 professionals held in Chicago on April 8-9, 2016. Using a consensus format, Dr. Mikel Gray from the University of Virginia adeptly guided the Staging Task Force and meeting participants to consensus on the updated definitions through an interactive discussion and voting process. During the meeting, the participants also validated the new terminology using photographs.

CMS stated, on a recent AHCA Quality Network call that there are no current plans to change the RAI Manual/MDS Coding regarding pressure ulcers and no changes planned at the current time to the regulations. If and when CMS decides to make any changes regarding this issue, AHCA/IHCA will notify our members and provide guidance/information.