

Risk Coding Tips and Tools

Improving Specificity in ICD-10 Diagnosis Coding

Documentation Tips:

- To improve specificity, the goal is to always diagnosis a condition to the highest level of specificity with the supportive documentation available in the medical record
- Over-reporting of unspecified diagnoses is significant and can have a direct impact on risk adjustment models

Physician Documentation Example

Example 1:

A 65-year-old female presents for follow up on her asthma. Currently not dyspneic but reports frequent nocturnal symptoms and limitations of physical activities. Patient is using her Proair inhaler several times per day and requires oral systemic corticosteroids for exacerbations. A referral for a pulmonologist was given.

 **Provider coded:** J45.909, unspecified asthma, uncomplicated (**not mapping to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) hierarchical condition category (HCC)**)

 **Correct code:** J45.50, severe persistent asthma, uncomplicated (**CMS-HCC Model V28**)

Example 2:

A 50-year-old man with past medical history of alcohol abuse, for about ten years, presented to emergency room for fever and loss of appetite. On admission, patient was hemodynamically stable. Abdomen was soft, nontender, and without fluid wave. Labs with leukocytosis, and elevated T-bili. CT scan showed hepatomegaly with steatosis, splenomegaly, and no ascites. Patient was diagnosed with acute alcoholic hepatitis. Patient completed course of antibiotics and noted symptom improvement after four days and then discharged. Today, he presents for hospital follow up. Denies continued fever. Alcohol cessation encouraged and referral for hepatologist made.

 **Provider coded:** K75.9, hepatitis, unspecified (**not mapping to CMS-HCC**)

 **Correct code:** K70.10, alcoholic hepatitis without ascites (**CMS-HCC Model V28**)

 **Please note:** Only use unspecified codes when they are the best choice to accurately reflect the healthcare encounter.

American Medical Association (2016). *Improving your ICD-10 diagnosis coding*. AMA.org. https://www.ama-assn.org/sites/ama-assn.org/files/corp/media-browser/premium/washington/icd-10-improving-diagnosis-coding_0.pdf
Sehrawat, T. S., Liu, M., & Shah, V. H. (2020). *The knowns and unknowns of treatment for alcoholic hepatitis*. *The lancet. Gastroenterology & Hepatology*, 5(5), pgs. 494–506. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253\(19\)30326-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253(19)30326-7)

You can find this resource and others like it in the OHN Risk Coding Corner at
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You can also contact us at RiskCoding@OrlandoHealth.com for additional questions or support needs.