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Risk Coding Tips and Tools
Understanding New Dementia Coding

Dementia occurs in conjunction with ischemic, degenerative, toxic conditions or damage to the brain. Changes to the blood supply due to cerebral issue can cause ischemic disease resulting in vascular dementia. According to the National Institutes of Aging (NIA), Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia in adults caused by changes in the brain, including abnormal buildups of proteins known as amyloid plaques and tau tangles.

What's New:

The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) advises that the documentation must clearly specify the seriousness or severity of the patient's condition regarding dementia.

- The ICD-10-CM classifies dementia (categories F01, F02, and F03) based on the etiology and severity (**unspecified, mild, moderate or severe**)
- Selection of the appropriate severity level requires the provider's clinical judgment and codes should be assigned based only on provider documentation
- If the documentation does not provide information about the severity of the dementia, the condition will be down coded to "unspecified"

Documentation Tips:

- Note all counseling services provided for driving alternatives, safety issues, neuropsychiatric referrals, interventions or any medication changes
- Note and document if any part of the patient's history is provided by someone other than the patient, as well as when the patient is accompanied to the visit by another person
- Be as specific as possible in describing the patient's mental capabilities, symptoms, and severity level

Physician Documentation Example
HPI: Patient brought in by daughter who reports her mother has been occasionally disoriented and confused which leads her to become agitated. Patient taking Donepezil for mild dementia.   **A&P**: Dementia in other diseases classified elsewhere, mild, with agitation.

References:
CMS. (2023). *ICD-10-CM Official guidelines for coding and reporting FY 2023*. CMS.gov. https://www.cms.gov/files/document/fy-2023-icd-10-cm-coding-guidelines-updated-01/11/2023.pdf
NIH. (2022). *What is Dementia? Symptoms, types, and diagnosis*. NIH.gov. https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-is-dementia
Christiansen, S. (2018). *Dementia: Stages, symptoms and treatment options for the disease*. Alzheimers.net. *https://www.alzheimers.net/dementia-stages-symptoms-and-treatment-options/*