

## 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 pulmonologist was given.

- ✗ **Provider coded:** J45.909, Unspecified asthma, uncomplicated (Not mapping to CMS-HCC)
- ✓ **Correct code:** J45.50, Severe persistent asthma, uncomplicated (CMS-HCC on V28 Model)

##### Example 2:

A 50-year-old man with PMH of alcohol abuse (for about 10 years) presented to ER for fever and loss of appetite. On admission, patient HDS. Abdomen was soft, nontender, and without fluid wave. Labs with leukocytosis, and elevated T-bili. CT showed hepatomegaly with steatosis, splenomegaly, and no ascites. Pt was diagnosed with acute Alcoholic Hepatitis. Patient completed course of antibiotics and noted symptom improvement after 4 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 on V28 Model)



**REMEMBER:** Use unspecified codes only when they are the best choice to accurately reflect the healthcare encounter.

#### References:

- AHIMA (n.d.). *Improving specificity in ICD-10 diagnosis coding*. Library.AHIMA.org. <https://library.ahima.org/doc?oid=302473>
- American Medical Association (n.d.). *Improving your ICD-10 diagnosis coding*. [https://www.ama-assn.org/sites/ama-assn.org/files/corp/media-browser/premium/washington/icd-10-improving-diagnosis-coding\\_0.pdf](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), 494–506. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253\(19\)30326-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253(19)30326-7)

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You can also contact us at [RiskCoding@OrlandoHealth.com](mailto:RiskCoding@OrlandoHealth.com) for additional questions or support needs.