

Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

End Stage Liver Disease



Overview

The liver is a large organ, located on the upper right side of the body, behind the lower ribs. The liver performs many important functions such as storing nutrients, removing waste and old blood cells, and filtering and processing chemicals found in food, alcohol, and medications. The liver also produces bile, which is a solution that helps the body digest fats and eliminate waste products¹.

Liver disease can be genetic, or it can occur as a result of damage from a variety of factors. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 4.9 million people have some form of liver disease². There are four stages of liver disease, which are inflammation, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and end stage liver disease³.

Causes

Chronic liver failure, also known as hepatic failure or end-stage liver disease

(ESLD), progresses over time. Most often, chronic liver failure is the result of cirrhosis, a condition in which scar tissue replaces healthy liver tissue until, eventually, the liver cannot function adequately. Cirrhosis usually progresses to the point where the liver loses most or all of its function and cirrhosis increases the risk of liver cancer. Patients with ESLD can develop ascites, a condition that causes excess fluid to build up in the abdomen and cause the belly to swell. ESLD can also lead to variceal bleeding in the lower esophagus and upper portion of the stomach, as well as hepatic encephalopathy, and renal impairment.

Liver disease has many causes, including viral hepatitis, obesity, cancer, alcohol, drugs, autoimmune disorders, and genetics.

Signs and Symptoms

Patients with cirrhosis often have no symptoms, but as the disease progresses and the damage becomes extensive, symptoms can include⁴:

- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Persistent or recurring yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Loss of appetite and/or nausea
- Swelling due to fluid buildup in the abdomen and legs
- Dark urine color

Treatment

Treatment will depend upon the stage of liver disease. Some treatments include lifestyle modifications, such as stopping alcohol use and losing weight. There are medications, such as antivirals, and surgical interventions to remove damaged tissue. The only effective treatment for patients with end-stage liver disease is a liver transplant.

Coding Guidance

Diagnosis codes for liver failure can be found in chapter eleven of the ICD-10-CM codebook⁵ and include details regarding disease acuity as well as coma status. Documentation in the medical record will need to include details in order to apply the most specific diagnosis code.

Hepatic Failure, not elsewhere classified (HCC 27)

- K72.01 - Acute and subacute hepatic failure with coma**
- K72.10 - Chronic hepatic failure without coma**
- K72.11 - Chronic hepatic failure with coma**
- K72.90 - Hepatic failure, unspecified without coma**
- K72.91 - Hepatic failure, unspecified with coma**

Resources:

¹ Centers for Disease Control (2015). The Liver. Accessed February 18, 2019 from cdc.org

In New Mexico, Amerigroup Community Care of New Mexico, Inc. In Texas, Amerigroup members in the Medicaid Rural Service Area are served by Amerigroup Insurance Company; all other Amerigroup members are served by Amerigroup Texas, Inc. In Washington, Amerigroup Washington, Inc. Amerivantage is a DSNP plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the State Medicaid program. In New Mexico: Amerivantage is an HMO with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Amerivantage depends on contract renewal.

² Centers for Disease Control (2016). Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis. Accessed February 18, 2019 from cdc.gov

³ American Liver Foundation (2017). The Progression of Liver Disease. Accessed December 12, 2018 from liverfoundation.org

⁴ Mayo Clinic (n.d.). Cirrhosis. Accessed February 18, 2019, from mayo.org

⁵ Schmidt, A. & Patterson, L. (2019). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians. Optum Insight Inc.