

Risk Adjustment Coding Academy- Coding Focus

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)



Depression is a condition which refers to feelings of sadness, discouragement or hopelessness. While anyone may experience these feelings from time to time, if they last for more than two weeks, and interfere with daily life, then it's more likely to be a major depressive episode.

Major depression, sometimes called clinical depression, is a condition that affects roughly 15.7 million people in the United States over the age of 18. It is a treatable illness which affects the way a person thinks, feels and functions¹.

Symptoms and Diagnosis

Major depression is marked by a persistently depressed mood which lasts for at least 2 weeks. Additionally, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (or DSM-5) lists several criteria that must be met in order to qualify as major depression².

A person suffering from major depression must have at least five of these symptoms over a two week period, and one of these must be either a depressed mood or a loss of interest in activities:

- Loss of interest in everyday activities
- Depressed mood

- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Psychomotor agitation
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Inability to think or concentrate
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Additionally, the symptoms must cause the patient significant impairment, not be due to the effects of a substance or due to another medical condition, and not be better explained as schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.

The exact cause of depression is not known, but there are a variety of factors that may be involved such as brain chemistry, hormones, and inherited traits. Treatment for major depression includes antidepressant medications such as monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOIs) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRIs), or tricyclic antidepressants. Additional treatments include psychotherapy with a trained specialist, and residential or inpatient hospital programs³.

Coding Guidance

In ICD-9-CM, there were diagnosis code subcategories: 296.2- (HCC 58) for a single episode and 296.3- (HCC 58) for a recurrent episode. A fifth digit was required to provide additional information regarding severity or remission status. In instances where the medical record only indicated depression, code 311 (no HCC) was assigned⁴.

In ICD-10-CM, codes to indicate major depressive disorder, single episode, are found in category F32. Code category

F33 (HCC 59) indicates major depressive disorder, recurrent. Both of these code categories require fourth digits to indicate the severity or provide remission status. Subcategory F33.4- requires a fifth digit to provide even greater detail regarding full or partial remission status⁵.

Per AHA Coding Clinic, chronic depression should be coded as F32.9 (no HCC), *Major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified*⁶. Per ICD-10-CM, code F32.9 is also used to indicate depression NOS (not otherwise specified) or depressive disorder NOS. Accurate and complete medical record documentation is vital in order to code to the highest degree of specificity for depression.

Resources:

¹ Anxiety and Depression Association of America (2016) Understand the Facts – Depression. Retrieved November 17, 2016 from adaa.org

² Michael Schreiner (2014) Major Depressive Disorder DSM 5 Criteria. Retrieved November 17, 2016 from evolutioncounseling.com

³ Mayo Clinic (n.d.) Depression (major Depressive Disorder). Retrieved November 17, 2016 from mayoclinic.org

⁴ Hart, A. C., Stegman, M. S., & Ford, B. (2011). ICD-9-CM for physicians, volumes 1 & 2: 2012 professional: International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, Clinical Modification. Eden Prairie, MN: OptumInsight.

⁵ Anita Schmidt, K.K., & P.W. (2016). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians. Optum360

⁶ AHA Coding Clinic, 2013, Fourth Issue "Chronic Depression"