Substance Related Disorders

OVERVIEW

Patients diagnosed with alcohol or drug-related conditions are often susceptible to both psychological and physiological manifestations and comorbidities, making accurate and complete documentation and coding difficult.

ICD-10 separates these conditions into 3 categories: use, abuse, and dependence. This categorization allows providers to track patient behavior that often has a negative impact on the patient's health. These coding details also provide useful information for researchers looking for better ways to care for patients diagnosed with addiction.

DOCUMENTATION AND CODING

Clear, specific documentation is essential for selecting the most accurate ICD-10 code for a patient with alcohol or drug-related conditions.

When a patient is evaluated for a substance-related condition, follow these steps when documenting:

1. Identify the substance type:
    a. For example, alcohol, opioids, cocaine, etc.
2. Document level of use:
    a. Use: Substance use in an amount or pattern that doesn't rise to the level of abuse or dependence.
        i. Only coded if substance use is associated with a substance related disorder or medical condition, and such a relationship is documented by the provider.
    b. Abuse: Substance abuse is defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use that has become socially, legally, or occupationally problematic for the individual.
    c. Dependence: Substance dependence refers to tolerance or the physical need for a substance. Tolerance is the need to use increasing amounts of a substance in order to achieve the desired effect.
        i. Uncomplicated or
        ii. In remission
3. Indicate accompanying conditions:
    a. Intoxication
    b. Withdrawal
    c. Delirium
    d. Perceptual disturbance
    e. Mood disorder
    f. Psychotic disorder with delusions or hallucinations
    g. Anxiety disorder
    h. Sexual dysfunction
    i. Sleep disorder

Per ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines, when a provider documents use, abuse, and dependence of the same substance, only one code should be assigned to identify the pattern of use based on the following hierarchy:

Documented	Assign only
Use and abuse	Abuse
Abuse and dependence	Dependence
Use, abuse, and dependence	Dependence
Use and dependence	Dependence

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When a patient is taking opioids prescribed by their physician for treatment of chronic pain and there is no documentation of an associated physical, mental or behavioral disorder, a code for opioid use should not be assigned. [1] Instead, assign ICD-10 code Z79.891 for therapeutic long-term (current) use of opioid analgesic.

For more information about documentation and coding of this and any other chronic or complex condition, email ProviderClinicalConsulting@Premera.com.

Note: Tip sheets are regularly reviewed and revised with pertinent technical specification updates from ICD-10-CM.

[1] "Prescribed Opioids for Pain Management." *AHA Coding Clinic for ICD*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 11. Second quarter 2018. www.encoderprofp.com. Accessed 18 February 2026.