

Closing Gaps & Meeting Metrics

Coding Tips & Best Practices

October 2020

Cancers and Neoplasms

What is a neoplasm?

A *neoplasm* is an abnormal new growth of cells. The cells in a neoplasm usually grow more rapidly than normal cells and will continue to grow if not treated. Malignant—or cancerous—neoplasms are a particularly threatening type of tumor.

Documentation Requirements

1. The histological type (adenocarcinoma, squamous cell, etc.) or behavior (benign, malignant, uncertain, unspecified)
2. The exact location, including the specific site within a body part
3. Whether the neoplasm is primary, secondary or carcinoma in situ (meaning confined to its original site with no spread)
4. Plan of care

Cancer Site

ICD-10 codes offer more specific choices based on the site and its laterality for paired organs and extremities. **Code the site of cancer within a body part to the highest level of specificity.**



For example, if the record states that a female patient is under current treatment for breast cancer in the upper outer quadrant of the left breast, the code assignment is: **C50.412 Malignant neoplasm of upper-outer quadrant of left female breast.**

When Cancer Spreads

A cancer that has spread from the place where it first started to another place in the body is called *metastatic* cancer. The process by which cancer cells spread to other parts of the body is called *metastasis*.

Metastatic cancer has the same name and the same type of cancer cells as the original, or primary, cancer. For example, breast cancer that spreads to and forms a metastatic tumor in the lung is metastatic breast cancer, not lung cancer.

Document both the primary and secondary site. For example: *Metastasis* bone cancer associated with history of primary prostate cancer.

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ICD-10 Codes

C00-C14	Lip, oral cavity and pharynx
C15-C26	Digestive organs
C30-C39	Respiratory and intrathoracic organs
C40-C41	Bone and articular cartilage
C43-C44	Melanoma and other malignant neoplasms of skin
C45-C49	Mesothelial and soft tissue
C50	Breast
C51-C58	Female genital organs
C60-C63	Male genital organs
C64-C68	Urinary tract
C69-C72	Eye, brain and other parts of central nervous system
C73-C75	Thyroid and other endocrine glands
C76-C80	Ill-defined, other secondary and unspecified sites
C7A	Neuroendocrine tumors
C81-C96	Lymphoid, hematopoietic and related tissue
C7B	Secondary neuroendocrine tumors
D00-D09	In situ neoplasms
D10-D36	Benign neoplasms, except benign neuroendocrine tumors
D37-D15	Neoplasms of uncertain behavior, polycythemia vera and myelodysplastic syndromes
D3A-D3A	Benign neuroendocrine tumors
D49	Neoplasms of unspecified behavior

Current or Active

Code cancer as *current or active* (subcategory C00-D49) when the medical record clearly documents active treatment and/or when the record clearly shows cancer is still present but meets any of these situations:

1. Unresponsive to treatment
2. Current treatment plan is observation only or *watchful waiting*
3. Patient has refused any further treatment

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Current or Active *(continued)*

Adjuvant Therapy

Active cancer treatment can include *adjuvant therapy*, any treatment given after the primary therapy to increase the chance of long-term disease-free survival, for cure or palliation. Adjuvant therapy may include chemotherapy, radiation, hormones, targeted therapy or biological therapy.

Watchful Waiting

Watchful waiting means monitoring cancer that is not causing symptoms or problems, but not giving treatment unless symptoms appear or change. It is also used when the risks of treatment are greater than the possible benefits. Code *watchful waiting* as active cancer.

Lymphoma in Remission

Lymphomas, even if in remission, should always be coded as active using remission codes and not *history of* codes. To accurately assign a code for lymphoma, review the entire medical record to locate the specific description of the lymphoma condition.

Coding for *History of*

Code cancer as *history of* (subcategory Z85) after the primary malignancy has been excised or eradicated, there is no active treatment directed to the primary site, and there is currently no evidence of disease or recurrence at the primary site.



Earn CEUs through Coding Webinars

Florida Blue offers on-demand webinars that provide detail about how to support diagnoses per Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines. These courses are updated for 2020 and are eligible for 1.5 continuing education unit credits each.

Topics include:

- Atrial fibrillation
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Major depression
- Mental health
- Rheumatoid arthritis



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References

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