

# Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

## Uncontrolled diabetes



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a disease that leads to above normal blood sugar (glucose) levels.<sup>1</sup>

### Monitoring DM

To minimize the chance of developing serious diabetic complications, a person with diabetes should try to keep their blood glucose level close to that of a person without diabetes. The target range is 70-130 mg/dL. Blood glucose levels can be monitored using a blood glucose meter (glucometer). High blood glucose is referred to hyperglycemia while low blood glucose is referred to hypoglycemia.<sup>2</sup>

Another test for blood glucose control is hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c). This blood test reflects the average level of glucose in blood during the prior 2 to 3 months.

The HbA1c target for most people with diabetes is below 7%. If at 8% or above, there may be a need to modify the patient's care plan for diabetes.

### Coding guidance

In ICD-10-CM, diabetes is classified as diabetes (by type) uncontrolled: meaning hyperglycemia, or meaning hypoglycemia in the ICD-10-CM alphabetic index.<sup>3</sup> Medical record documentation must clearly indicate the presence of hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia to ensure accurate diagnosis code assignment.

Clinicians typically use the phrase **uncontrolled DM** to describe a patient whose blood glucose levels are elevated or whose HbA1c is above target. Since documentation of **uncontrolled DM** does not allow coders to assign a specific code as explained above, clinicians may use alternate phrases that will map to diabetes with hyperglycemia. These phrases are **poorly controlled**, **out of control** and **inadequately controlled DM**.

### Other coding considerations

According to American Hospital Association Coding Clinic, "Any combination of the diabetes codes can be assigned together, unless one diabetic condition is inherent in another."<sup>4</sup> For example, diabetic retinopathy documented with hyperglycemia would be reported with two ICD-10 codes: E11.319, Type 2 DM with unspecified diabetic retinopathy without macular edema, and E11.65, Type 2 DM with hyperglycemia.

It is a documentation best practice to clearly identify any diabetic complications and casual relationships with linking verbiage such as **due to** or **secondary to**.

Atherosclerotic heart disease of coronary artery	
E11.641	Type 2 diabetes mellitus with hypoglycemia with coma
E11.649	Type 2 diabetes mellitus with hypoglycemia without coma
E11.65	Type 2 diabetes mellitus with hyperglycemia

### Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, *Diabetes* (accessed August 2020): <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/diabetes.html>.
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases website, *Manage Your Diabetes* (accessed August 2020): <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/>
- Optum 360° (2019), *ICD-10- CM Expert for Physicians, The complete official code set*.
- AHA Coding Clinic, 2013, 3Q, "Diabetes with Hyperglycemia".

Reference the ICD-10-CM Codebook, CMS-HCC Risk Adjustment Model(s) and AHA Coding Clinic for complete code sets and official coding guidance.