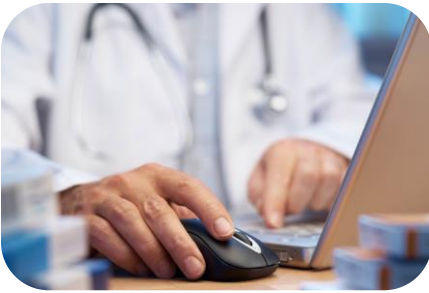


# Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

## Rheumatoid Arthritis



### Overview

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic autoimmune disease that occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own tissue and joints. Chronic inflammation causes the tissue that lines the inside of the joints, called the synovium, to thicken. The synovium makes a fluid that lubricates the joints and helps them to move smoothly. A lack of this fluid will result in pain and swelling around the joints and, over time, lead to atrophy and a loss in bone density.

More than 1.5 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and the rate of occurrence is higher among women than men.<sup>1</sup>

### Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms and effects of rheumatoid arthritis can come and go and a flare in the disease can last for days or even months. Rheumatoid arthritis causes deformity, pain, stiffness and swelling of the joints. Patients have also reported fatigue, fever, weakness and weight loss with rheumatoid arthritis.

The disease is more common in the feet, hands, knees and wrists but can affect any joint. For some people, this

condition can also damage other body systems such as the blood vessels, eyes, heart, nerves and skin.<sup>2</sup>

### Risk Factors

Rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age but onset typically happens among people in their sixties. Smoking, inherited traits and obesity can increase a person's risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis and can make the effects of the disease worse.<sup>3</sup>

### Treatment

The goal for treatment is to slow or stop the progression of the disease and damage to the joints. The earlier the symptoms of this disease are diagnosed, the earlier treatment can begin to control the inflammation and reduce damaging effects such as:

- NSAIDs are prescribed to ease arthritis pain and inflammation
- Corticosteroids are utilized to get the inflammation under control during a flare
- Biologics administered by injection or infusion may be used when other medications are not effective
- Joint replacement is another treatment option when there is permanent damage to areas such as ankles, hips, knees or shoulders.

### Coding Guidance

Diagnosis codes for rheumatoid arthritis are located in chapter 13 of the ICD-10-CM codebook. These codes contain detail that indicate the anatomical site, including laterality, along with any organ

involvement. The medical record needs to clearly indicate the rheumatoid arthritis type, location, and/or associated complications (if present) in order to code to the highest degree of specificity.<sup>4</sup>

#### Other Rheumatoid Arthritis without Rheumatoid Factor (HCC 40)

**M06.00** – Unspecified Site  
**M06.01\*** – Shoulder  
**M06.02\*** – Elbow  
**M06.03\*** – Wrist  
**M06.04\*** – Hand  
**M06.05\*** – Hip  
**M06.06\*** – Knee  
**M06.07\*** – Ankle and foot  
**M06.08** – Vertebrae  
**M06.09** – Multiple Sites

**\*requires additional characters to indicate laterality**

•\_\_1 – right  
 •\_\_2 – left  
 •\_\_9 – unspecified

### Resources:

<sup>1</sup> Arthritis Foundation (n.d.). What is Rheumatoid Arthritis? Accessed October 25, 2018, from [arthritis.org](http://arthritis.org)

<sup>2</sup> Cleveland Clinic (2017). Rheumatoid Arthritis. Accessed October 26, 2018, from [clevelandclinic.org](http://clevelandclinic.org)

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017). Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). Accessed October 26, 2018, from [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt, A., & Patterson, L. (2018). ICD-10-CM Professional for Physicians. Salt Lake City: OPTUM360.