Tips & Tricks

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Find & assign the correct fracture codes

Pathologic vs Traumatic

Pathological fractures result from a weakening of the bone structure in conditions such as osteoporosis, neoplastic disease, metabolic conditions or infection. This type of fracture would not otherwise occur if the bone were not weakened by disease.

Traumatic fractures result from external influences, or trauma, that cause damage to the bone. Examples of trauma would be a fall, an accident or an assault.

A code from category M80, not a traumatic fracture code, should be used for any patient with known osteoporosis who suffers a fracture, even if the patient had a minor fall or trauma, if that fall or trauma would not usually break a normal, healthy bone.

Section I.C.19.c.1)

Pathologic 7ᵗʰ Character

7th character A is for use as long as the patient is receiving active treatment for the fracture…. assignment of the 7th character is based on whether the patient is undergoing active treatment and not whether the provider is seeing the patient for the first time.

Section I.C.13.c

7th character D is to be used for encounters after the patient has completed active treatment. The other 7th characters, listed under each subcategory in the Tabular List, are to be used for subsequent encounters for **routine care of fractures during the healing and recovery phase as well as** treatment of problems associated with the healing, such as malunions, nonunions, and sequelae.

Section I.C.13.c

Traumatic 7ᵗʰ Character

Traumatic fractures are coded using the appropriate 7th character for initial encounter (A, B, C) for each encounter where the patient is receiving active treatment for the fracture. The appropriate 7th character for initial encounter should also be assigned for a patient who delayed seeking treatment for the fracture or nonunion.

Section I.C.19.c.1)

Fractures are coded using the appropriate 7th character for subsequent care for encounters after the patient has completed active treatment of the fracture and is receiving routine care for the fracture during the healing or recovery phase.

Section I.C.19.c.1)

Fracture Guidelines

A fracture not indicated as open or closed should be coded to closed. A fracture not indicated whether displaced or not displaced should be coded to displaced.

Section I.C.19.c

Care for complications of surgical treatment for fracture repairs during the healing or recovery phase should be coded with the appropriate complication codes.

Section I.C.13.c & Section I.C.19.c.1)

The aftercare Z codes should not be used for aftercare for traumatic fractures. For aftercare of a traumatic fracture, assign the acute fracture code with the appropriate 7th character.

Section I.C.19.c.1)

ICD-10 Coding Tips

1. Don't confuse a periprosthetic fracture of the bone with the breakage of the prosthetic joint itself

2. Pay close attention to the Excludes 1 (means "not coded here") and Excludes 2 (means "may be coded") notes under each section

3. Include an external cause code to indicate that the fracture resulted from a fall, for example

4. If there is no documented cause of the osteoporosis, code it as age-related osteoporosis and assign a code from subcategory M80.0-.