Chronic Condition Coding: Autistic Disorder

Autistic Disorder

Autism is a brain disorder that limits a person’s ability to communicate and relate to other people. Also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the term “spectrum” reflects the wide variation in challenges and strengths possessed by each person. Some people can navigate their world, some have exceptional abilities and some struggle to speak.

Symptoms of Autism

Signs of ASD tend to appear between two and three years of age and can include repeated motions and/or words, avoiding eye contact or physical touch, delays in learning to talk and getting upset by minor changes. Additionally, some people with autism can experience physical symptoms such as constipation, sleep problems, poor coordination of muscles and seizures. These signs, however, can also occur in children without ASD and at any age. It is important that caregivers talk with a healthcare provider to request a screening for autism.

Treatment of Autism

Treatment for ASD is dependent on screening results. A diagnosis of autism is not needed for people to begin receiving services related to developmental delays or learning challenges. Treatments include behavior programs, individualized education programs (IEPs), medication, sensory processing, assistive technology and diet.

Autistic Disorder Coding Guidance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIPS:</th>
<th>ICD-10 Mapping &amp; Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refer to ICD-10-CM</td>
<td>F84.0 (Autistic disorder)³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use additional code... ...to identify any associated medical condition such as:
- Constipation
- Sleep problems
- Poor coordination of muscles
- Seizures
...and intellectual disabilities such as IQ:
- Mild (IQ 50–69) F70
- Moderate (IQ 35–49) F71
- Severe (IQ 20–34) F72
- Profound (IQ under 20) F73
- Other intellectual disabilities F78
- Unspecified intellectual disabilities F79

Avoid terms such as “history of”...
- Incorrect wording: Patient has history of autism.
- Correct wording: Patient has autism and continues medication.

Documentation and Coding Tips

The following language supports actively monitoring [any] condition and must be documented by the provider. In the documentation, mention...
- If the patient is receiving therapy.
- Getting a refill on medication.
- The status of the condition.

Resources: