Chronic Condition Coding: Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks[1]. People who have bipolar disorder can have periods in which they feel overly happy and energized and other periods of feeling very sad, hopeless and sluggish. In between those periods, they usually feel "normal." One can think of the highs and the lows as two "poles" of mood, which is why it's called "bipolar" disorder.[2]

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

People with bipolar disorder experience periods of unusually intense emotion, changes in sleep patterns and activity levels, and unusual behaviors. These distinct periods are called "mood episodes[1]." A clinician would have to determine whether they may be the result of another cause (such as low thyroid, or mood symptoms caused by drug or alcohol abuse).[2]

Treatment of Bipolar Disorder

Medication is the main treatment, usually involving "mood stabilizers." Psychotherapy, or "talk therapy," is often recommended, too.[2]

Bipolar Coding Guidance

TIPS:	ICD-10 Mapping & Education
Refer to ICD-10-CM	F31.0 – F31.9 (Bipolar disorder)[3]
Be precise	Avoid broad terms and unspecified codes such as "Bipolar disorder", F31.9, or "Bipolar II disorder", F31.81. • Be meticulous in picking up the details in documentation. • It leads to precise coding and a better awareness about the disease and the population it affects.
Use specifying terms in the documentation, such as…	• Type I or II • Current or in remission • Manic or mixed • Severity (mild, moderate, severe) • Presence of psychotic features
Bipolar previously diagnosed? Consider the following…	• Two similar conditions cannot occur together, e.g., reporting Depression when Bipolar has been addressed. • Depression is considered inclusive of Bipolar disorder, per ICD-10-CM "Excludes 1" note.
Refill medication correctly	Don't forget to verify the condition and list the diagnosis in the Assessment and Plan.