Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) – Capturing Z55-Z65 Codes

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According to the World Health Organization, WHO: “Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.” Variables such as income, employment status, and access to housing are examples of SDoH. Providers and facilities should be encouraged by all HIM professionals to use the ICD-10-CM Z codes (Z55-Z65) that document the socioeconomic factors to identify patient populations and to assist with future clinical and social interventions. These codes provide data for improving care coordination and capture the complete picture of the environment of the patients for payers and providers.

Z55 - Z65 codes are in Chapter 21 “Factors influencing health status and contact with health services”

**Z55-Z65- Persons with potential health hazards related to socioeconomic and psychosocial circumstances.**

Z55 – Problems related to education and literacy
Z56 – Problems related to employment and unemployment
Z57 – Occupational exposure to risk factors
Z59 – Problems related to housing and economic circumstances
Z60 – Problems related to social environment
Z62 – Problems related to upbringing
Z63 – Other problems related to primary support group, including family circumstances
Z64 – Problems related to certain psychosocial circumstances
Z65 – Problems related to other psychosocial circumstances

The codes may be further broken down. For example, Z59.0-Z59.7 are codes that can have a major impact on a hospital’s risk model which includes the expected mortality, length of stay, and cost per patient. When a patient in an acute hospital has any of the conditions below, it increases the length of stay and adds additional cost to the provider. In addition, studies have shown that Z59.0, Homelessness, is a determining factor in readmission rates.

**Z59 – Problems related to housing and economic circumstances**

Z59.0 – Homelessness
Z59.1 – Inadequate housing
Z59.4 – Lack of adequate food and safe drinking water
Z59.5 – Extreme poverty
Z59.6 – Low income
Z59.7 – Insufficient social insurance and welfare support

**Documentation Guidance**

The ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, 1.B.14, *Documentation by Clinicians Other than the Patient’s Provider* was revised in FY 2019 for specific guidance for coding professionals.
Medical record documentation from clinicians involved in the care of the patient who are not the patient’s provider can be used for code assignment for the social determinants of health (codes in categories Z55-Z65) reported data.

A Q&A in the AHA Coding Clinic, Volume 6, Number 4, 4th Quarter 2019, pgs. 67-68 states that the guidelines do not have a unique definition of “clinicians” but documentation that meets the requirements based on regulatory or accreditation requirements or internal hospital policies, could be used for code assignment for SDoH Z codes.

AHA Coding Clinic, Volume 6, Number 4, 4th Quarter 2019, pgs. 66-67 also provides guidance that “If the patient self-reported information is signed-off and incorporated into the health record by either a clinician or provider, it would be appropriate to assign codes from categories Z55-Z65, describing social determinants of health.”

As hospitals are moving towards value-based care and focusing on reducing readmission rates, it is imperative HIM professionals and both inpatient and outpatient providers work together to ensure they are gathering and documenting sufficient data.

References:

https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2019/18_0189.htm


https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/


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https://www.3mhisinsideangle.com/blog-post/icd-10-adds-more-detail-on-the-social-determinants-of-health/