

Dermatology Coding Alert

Reader Question: Atypical Moles Reporting Isn't Clear-Cut

Question: How should I code a dysplastic nevus on the body (trunk)?

Maryland Subscriber

Answer: Dysplastic nevi, also known as atypical moles (AM), are acquired melanocytic lesions of the skin. AMs differ from common acquired melanocytic nevi in several respects, including diameter and lack of pigment uniformity. You may have also heard these moles called by these names: active junctional nevi, atypical melanocytic nevi, B-K mole, Clark's nevi, dysplastic nevi, and dysplastic mole.

Although evidence suggests that melanoma can arise directly from AMs, dermatologists consider melanoma a benign neoplasm, and you should code it as such. Code to the specific site in ICD-9-CM category 216.

However, evidence also suggests that patients with a family history of melanoma are at greater risk for the AM to progress into a melanoma. Therefore, for a patient with a family history of melanoma, use V16.8 to indicate that the family history exists.