

Eli's Rehab Report

Reader Questions: Memory Loss

Question: Is there a code for subjective memory loss without a confirmed cause, e.g., the patient does not have Alzheimer's disease? Our carrier rejected 780.9.

Virginia Subscriber

Answer: Your carrier is most likely rejecting 780.9 (Other general symptoms) because as of Oct. 1, 2002, it is using the 2003 ICD-9 codes, and 780.9 now requires a fifth digit. If you want to report the "Other general symptoms" diagnosis, you must use 780.99 or your claim will be rejected, because 780.9 is now considered a truncated code.

Because 780.99 is so general, you may want to review the codes in the 310.1-310.9 range. These will offer your carrier a more specific diagnosis and should reduce denials. Code 310.1 (Organic personality syndrome) includes "mild memory disturbance" and "senility with mental changes of nonpsychotic severity," which appears to fit your patient's symptoms.

If organic brain damage caused your patient's memory loss, report 310.9 (Unspecified nonpsychotic mental disorder following organic brain damage). You should code senility degeneration of the brain as 331.2. If you are unsure whether any of these codes applies to your patient, double-check with the physiatrist to select the most accurate code.

You Be the Coder and Reader Questions were reviewed by **Laureen Jandroep, OTR, CPC, CCS-P CPC-H, CCS,** consultant and CPC trainer for A+ Medical Management and Education in Absecon, N.J.