

Outpatient Facility Coding Alert

You Be the Coder: Dig Down to the Reason for Chronic Pain

Question: What is the difference between acute and chronic pain, from a coding perspective?

Rhode Island Subscriber

Answer: Acute pain typically lasts less than three to six months and can be directly related to tissue damage or associated with a recent accident, injury or surgery. Normally, acute pain disappears when the underlying cause of the pain has been treated or has healed.

ICD-10 codes: Codes that you'll use for acute pain diagnoses include:

- G89.0, Central pain syndrome
- G89.11, Acute pain due to trauma
- G89.12, Acute post-thoracotomy pain
- G89.18, Other acute postprocedural pain
- R52, Acute pain NOS

Unlike acute pain's more temporary nature, chronic pain is ongoing and can last for six months or even more. Patients with chronic pain could have an identifiable pain generator, such as an injury, or they might have no identifiable pain generators.

ICD-10 codes: Codes that you'll use for chronic pain diagnoses include:

- G89.21, Chronic pain due to trauma
- G89.22, Chronic post-thoracotomy pain
- G89.28, Other chronic postprocedural pain
- G89.29, Other chronic pain.