

Pain Management Coding Alert

Reader Question: Follow This Path to Osteoarthritis Dx Knowledge

Question: What is osteoarthritis, how is it different than rheumatoid arthritis, and what is the correct ICD-10 code for primary osteoarthritis of the knee?

Mississippi Subscriber

Answer: While osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis share some characteristics, "each has different symptoms and requires different treatment. So an accurate diagnosis is important," according to University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health (UWHealth).

"The main difference between osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis is the cause behind the joint symptoms. Osteoarthritis is caused by mechanical wear and tear on joints. Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease in which the body's own immune system attacks the body's joints," according to UWHealth.

For primary osteoarthritis of the knee, you'd choose from one (or more) of the following ICD-10 codes, depending on the patient's symptoms:

- M17.0 (Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of knee)
- M17.10 (Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, unspecified knee)
- M17.11 (Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, right knee)
- M17.12 (Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, left knee).