Emergency Care Principal Diagnosis Selection Guide

IHACPA

The Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (IHACPA) is responsible for the development of the emergency care classification systems along with other variables, principal diagnoses may be used to classify episodes of emergency care.

Definition

A principal diagnosis is the diagnosis established at the conclusion of the patient's attendance in an emergency department (ED) or emergency service to be mainly responsible for occasioning the attendance following consideration of clinical assessment.

Choosing the correct emergency care principal diagnosis

Injuries
Search for the type of injury and specify the anatomical location.

Poisoning
Select the substance or animal producing the venom.

Attempted suicide, with injury
Select the injury or poisoning.

Multiple diseases or injuries
Select the most responsible for occasioning the attendance, other diseases or injuries can be entered in other fields.

Observation of condition with no diagnosis
Select the presenting symptom.

Attempted suicide, without injury
Select the underlying mental or behavioural disorder, otherwise select suicidal ideation.

Attempted self-harm
Select 'attempted self-injury'.

No established diagnosis at conclusion
Select the presenting symptom.

Concepts not collected as the emergency care principal diagnosis

Procedures or investigations
For an emergency care principal diagnosis, instead select the disease or injury that required the procedure or investigation.

Comorbidities
For an emergency care principal diagnosis, instead select the reason for presentation. Comorbidities that were treated or investigated can be captured as additional diagnoses.

Causes of injury
For an emergency care principal diagnosis, instead select the injury.

Social determinants
For an emergency care principal diagnosis, instead select the reason for presentation.

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Reasons for collecting the emergency care principal diagnosis

The correct principal diagnosis helps identify the reasons people access the Australian emergency care system for the purposes of research, education, service planning, and administration. This information is also used to facilitate payment of health services, determine utilisation patterns and evaluate the appropriateness of healthcare costs.

Patient presents with	Following clinical assessment	Principal diagnosis	National reporting standard
Ascites	Ascites due to advanced alcoholic liver disease	Advanced alcoholic liver disease	Alcoholic liver disease
Abdominal pain	No established diagnosis, after assessment	Abdominal pain	Pain in abdomen, acute
Abdominal pain	Assessments reveal gallstones	Gallstones	Cholelithiasis without cholecystitis
Accidental overdose of opioids	Morphine used for overdose	Morphine overdose	Poisoning or exposure to codeine, morphine, or other opioids
Attempted suicide with opioid overdose	No established diagnosis, morphine used for overdose	Morphine overdose	Poisoning or exposure to codeine, morphine, or other opioids
Attempted suicide with no injury	No established diagnosis	Suicidal ideation	Suicidal ideation
Attempted suicide with no injury	Assessment reveals recurrent major depression	Major depression	Depressive episode, recurrent
Fall from slipping in kitchen with suspected head injury	No established diagnosis	Head injury	Injury, unspecified or suspected of head
Request for procedure, fractured wrist requiring application of plaster	Wrist fracture	Wrist fracture	Fracture of wrist and hand

National reporting standard

The Emergency Department ICD-10-AM Principal Diagnosis Short List (ED Short List) is a set of terms used for reporting emergency care principal diagnoses to national activity datasets. Other diagnosis terms may be used in your local patient administration information system.

Tips for selecting diagnoses in your local patient administration information systems

- Additional diagnoses are not able to be captured in all patient administration information systems, although their collection is encouraged where possible. Selection of the principal diagnosis should not be affected by whether additional diagnoses can be collected.
- Searching functionality varies across patient administration information systems. Seek advice from your hospital administrator for how to best search the principal diagnosis field.

Additional resources

- Australian Emergency Care Classification fact sheet — an overview of the Australian Emergency Care Classification.