

HOME HEALTH REFERRALS: WHAT IS AN “ACCEPTABLE” DIAGNOSIS?

- **Patient Driven Groupings Model (PDGM):** Case mix payment model for home health agencies, adopted by CMS and many non-Medicare insurers in 2020.
- PDGM relies heavily on the primary reason, or primary diagnosis, for a home health referral.
- CMS deemed more than **20,000** ICD-10-CM codes as inappropriate for the coverage of home health services, thus “unacceptable” diagnoses.
- **Home Health Agencies are prohibited from submitting claims with “unacceptable” primary diagnoses.**

Unacceptable Diagnoses

- Address symptoms, rather than the underlying cause.
- Fail to identify laterality.
- *Unspecified conditions ending in “9.”
- *Symptom codes beginning with “R.”

**Few exceptions, though most “9” and “R” codes are not acceptable.*

Acceptable Diagnoses

- Connect the symptom to the relevant, causal factor.
- Distinguish location.
- Specifies nature of diagnosis.

Unacceptable Diagnosis	Fix Needed	Acceptable Alternative**
R29.6, Repeated falls	Identify the disease or condition causing the falls	E11.42, Type 2 diabetes mellitus with diabetic polyneuropathy
M54.5, Low back pain	Identify the underlying cause of back pain	M48.07, Spinal stenosis, lumbosacral region
R26.89, Other abnormalities of gait and mobility	Identify the cause of abnormal gait	I69.351, Hemiplegia following cerebral infrc aff right dominant side
M25.561, Pain in right knee	Identify the cause of knee pain	M17.11, Unilateral primary osteoarthritis of right knee
M19.9, Unspecified osteoarthritis of unspecified site	Specify the type of OA and site	M15.0, Primary generalized (osteo)arthritis
M62.81, Muscle weakness (generalized)	Provide reason for weakness	G35.0, Multiple sclerosis
S81.809A, Unspecified open wound, unspecified lower leg, init encntr	Specify type and location of wound	I87.313, Chronic venous hypertension w ulcer of bilateral low extrm
R60.9, Edema, unspecified	Indicate cause and location of edema	I87.2, Venous insufficiency (chronic)(peripheral)

***The above alternatives serve only as examples and are not intended to influence a provider’s diagnosis or documentation.*