Physiology Coding Tip

Lumbago

In an effort to aid Health Information Management Coding Professionals with ICD-10 readiness, the following physiology training tip is provided with an educational intent.

Lumbago Defined
Lumbago is a nonclinical term for acute or chronic low or lumbar back pain without specified cause. Lumbago is a symptom that may be caused by a large variety of diseases and disorders that affect the lumbar spine which affects 80% of the general United States population at some point in life with sufficient severity to cause absence from work.

Signs and Symptoms of Lumbago
- Stiffness of the lower back
- Low back muscle spasm
- Numbness or weakness of the legs
- Pain that radiates down the leg
- Localized to a surface area of the low back
- Radicular pain caused by irritation of a nerve root
- Diffuse pain spread over a larger area of the back from deep tissue layers
- Referred pain perceived in the low back caused by inflammation elsewhere such as the kidneys or lower abdomen

Underlying Causes of Lumbago
- Muscle strain: caused by heavy lifting or job-related stooping, bending, or other stressful postures; obesity; pregnancy.
- Herniated Vertebral Disk: a disk bulging outward or rupture between the vertebrae causing chronic low back pain. Pain may also radiate down the leg if there is sciatic nerve impingement.
- Spinal Stenosis: Narrowing of the spinal canal causing compression of the spinal nerve cord and pain.
- Compression Fractures: Traumatic or pathologic in nature.
- Malignancy: Primary malignancy in the cauda equina or a secondary malignancy that has spread to the spine from a primary site.
- Infection: Abscesses in the space between the spinal cord or dura mater; vertebral osteomyelitis; bladder infections; abdominal infections such as appendicitis.
- Ankylosing Spondylitis: A form of degenerative joint disease that affects the spine causing chronic low back pain; often confused with mechanical back pain in its early stages.
- Vascular insufficiency: Pain in the lower back and buttocks caused by vascular insufficiency such as terminal aortic occlusion.
- Fibromyalgia: May affect the muscles and soft tissue of the lower back causing chronic muscle pain, fatigue and painful trigger points.

References/Resources:
1. Mosby’s Medical Dictionary
3. WebMD

Coding Clinic is the official resource and authority for ICD-10 coding rules and conventions.

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