

CDC Adds Diagnostic Code for Sepsis Survivors: Four Notes

Erica Carbajal, Oct 21, 2024

The CDC has [added](#) a new diagnostic code meant to improve care for patients after a sepsis hospitalization. The new code, which went into effect Oct. 1, is meant to foster better communication between hospitals, home-care and other post-acute providers regarding ongoing care for sepsis survivors.

Four details:

1. The CDC approved a new ICD-10 code, z51A, for post hospital sepsis care in July. While it is now in effect, federal agencies have not released formal guidance on how to use the code, or whether Medicare and private insurers will recognize the code for billing purposes, [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported Oct. 21.
2. The new code was spurred by findings from nursing researchers at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and VNS Health, a home-care organization based in New York City. They analyzed records of more than 165,000 sepsis survivors entering home care and found that the condition was noted in admission assessments just 7% of the time, suggesting post-acute providers are often unaware their patients had sepsis while hospitalized.

"It is critically important to communicate sepsis survivorship across transitions in care because among those readmitted from home health care, one-third occur in the first seven days," Kathryn Bowles, PhD, RN, lead study author and professor at Penn Nursing, said in a news release. "We are hopeful this new ICD code will direct the necessary attention to sepsis survivors and improve outcomes for the 1.7 million Americans who encounter sepsis each year."

3. Sepsis is one of the most common reasons for ICU admission and is the leading cause of death among hospitalized patients. One in 5 patients are readmitted within 30 days of discharge after sepsis, according to a 2019 [study](#) from Cleveland Clinic researchers.
4. The CDC has been working to [create](#) more resources and tools to guide hospitals in managing care for sepsis patients. In August 2023, the agency [unveiled](#) a hospital sepsis program, outlining seven core elements to improve outcomes. The agency [found](#) that, despite the condition's prevalence, only 55% of hospitals provide sepsis program leaders with dedicated daily time to manage a programs.

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