

Documentation and Coding: Metastatic Cancer/ Secondary Malignant Neoplasm

April 2023

At Healthfirst, we are committed to helping providers accurately document and code their patients' health records. This tip sheet is intended to assist providers and coding staff with the documentation and ICD-10-CM selection on services submitted to Healthfirst—specifically for common types of **Metastatic Cancer/Secondary Malignant Neoplasm**. It provides information from industry sources about proper coding practice. However, this document does not represent or guarantee that Healthfirst will cover and/or pay for services outlined. Coverage decisions are based on the terms of the applicable evidence of coverage and the provider's participation agreement. This includes the determination of any amounts that Healthfirst or the member owes the provider.

When neoplasms are identified as malignant, document the primary site and any secondary (metastatic) sites.

Clinical Documentation and Coding Tips

Type of neoplasm:	Treatment:	Complications:	Active cancer should include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary ▪ Secondary ▪ Ca in Situ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surgery/ cryoablation ▪ Chemotherapy ▪ Radiation Therapy ▪ Targeted Therapy ▪ Hormone Therapy ▪ Immunotherapy ▪ Bone marrow transplant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anemia ▪ Malnutrition ▪ Dehydration ▪ Neutropenia ▪ Thrombocytopenia ▪ Infection (viral or bacterial) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anatomical site ▪ Metastatic site ▪ Type/Behavior of neoplasm ▪ Treatment (curative and palliative purpose) ▪ Associated conditions (HIV, infection, etc.)

- The term "**Metastatic to**" indicates that the site mentioned is secondary. The term "**Metastatic from**" indicates that the site mentioned is the **Primary**.
- Prior to using a **non-specific** code for metastatic cancer, review the record to determine if a **specific metastatic** site is identified and, if so, code to the **highest specificity**.
- If two or more sites are documented as **metastatic**, each of the designated sites should be coded as **secondary**.
- If the **primary** malignant site is still present, it should be documented.
- **Lymphoma**, regardless of the number of sites involved, is **not** considered **metastatic** (*Coding Clinic, 2nd quarter, 1992*).

Metastatic Cancer/Secondary Malignant Neoplasm

Secondary Malignant Neoplasm of Lymphoid Tissue

When a malignant neoplasm of lymphoid tissue metastasizes beyond the lymph nodes, a code from categories C81–C85 with a final character “9” should be assigned identifying **extranodal and solid organ sites** rather than a code for the secondary neoplasm of the affected solid organ.

For example, for metastasis of B-cell lymphoma to the lung, brain, and left adrenal gland, assign code C83.39, Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, extranodal and solid organ sites.

Malignant Neoplasms Classified as Secondary (when not otherwise specified)

The following sites are classifiable to code **C79**.*

- Bone
- Brain
- Diaphragm
- Heart
- Pleura
- Lymph Nodes
- Mediastinum
- Meninges
- Peritoneum
- Retroperitoneum
- Spinal Cord

Note: This does not include neoplasm of the liver. ICD-10-CM provides code C22.9, malignant neoplasm of liver, not specified as primary or secondary, for the use in this situation.

*Additional digit required to complete the code.

ICD-10 Codes and Description

ICD-10-CM	Description
C77*	Secondary and unspecified malignant neoplasm of lymph nodes
C78*	Secondary malignant neoplasm of respiratory and digestive organs
C79*	Secondary malignant neoplasm of other and unspecified sites
C79.9	Secondary malignant neoplasm of unspecified site (when no site is identified for the secondary neoplasm).
C80.0	Disseminated malignant neoplasm, unspecified (when the patient has advanced metastatic disease, and no known primary or secondary sites are specified).

*Additional digit required to complete the code.

Metastatic Cancer/Secondary Malignant Neoplasm

Codes for Personal History of Malignant Neoplasm

Prostate	Breast	Other Parts of Uterus	Ovary	Large Intestine	Rectum & Anus	Bladder	Skin	Bone	Pancreas
Z85.46	Z85.3	Z85.42	Z85.43	Z85.038	Z85.048	Z85.51	Z85.820	Z85.830	Z85.07

Coding Examples

Case 1	ICD-10-CM	Rationale
Patient who was recently diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer came to discuss treatment plan.	C79.81 – Secondary malignant neoplasm of breast	Metastatic cancer has the same name as the primary cancer. For example, breast cancer that spreads to the lung is called metastatic breast cancer, not lung cancer .

Case 2	ICD-10-CM	Rationale
A patient with metastatic bone cancer originating from the cervix; she is post hysterectomy and has completed treatment for the cervical cancer. There is no evidence of remaining disease at the primary site. The patient complains of bone pain and requests a refill of pain meds. How is this coded?	G89.3 – Neoplasm related pain (acute) (chronic) C79.51 – Secondary malignant neoplasm of bone Z85.41 – Personal history of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri	The code first for the reason of the visit, along with the code for the secondary (metastatic) site, are sequenced first, followed by a personal history code to identify the former site of the primary malignancy.

Documentation and Coding:

Metastatic Cancer/Secondary Malignant Neoplasm

Questions?

Contact us at #Risk_Adjustments_and_clinical_Documentation@healthfirst.org.

For additional documentation and coding guidance, please visit the coding section at [HFproviders.org](https://www.healthfirst.org/HFproviders.org).

References

- [ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines, FY 2023](#)
- [Coding Clinic Advisor](#)