

Documentation and Coding: Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis

October 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 **rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis**. 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.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease: the immune system attacks the body's joints. **Osteoarthritis (OA)**, the most common type of arthritis, is a chronic noninflammatory disease found in older adults and is known for its degenerative nature.

Clinical Documentation and Coding Tips

Rheumatoid Arthritis	vs.	Osteoarthritis
ICD-10-CM Codes and Descriptions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ M05.* – Rheumatoid arthritis with rheumatoid factor (Seropositive) ■ M06.* – Other rheumatoid arthritis (Seronegative) ■ M08.* – Juvenile arthritis 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ M15.* – Polyosteoarthritis ■ M16.* – Osteoarthritis of hip ■ M17.* – Osteoarthritis of knee ■ M18.* – Osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint ■ M19.* – Other and unspecified osteoarthritis

*Requires additional digit to complete the diagnosis code.

Documentation and Coding: Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis

Rheumatoid Arthritis	vs.	Osteoarthritis
Coding and Documentation Tips		
<p>Anatomical site, laterality, and type of RA RA has more than 700 ICD-10 codes; be sure to code to the highest level of specificity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Affected sites: joints of hands and feet in early stages; as RA progresses, other joints become involved. ▪ Age of onset can be anytime in life, with rapid progression over weeks. ▪ Diagnostic Tests: Rh Factor and Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR), ultrasound, CT scans, X-rays, and MRI. ▪ Treatment/Surgical: Total Joint Arthroplasties and Synovectomy. NSAIDS, Corticosteroids, B-Cell Depleting Agents, Tumor Necrosis Factor Inhibitors, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Joint Stress Reduction by maintaining a healthy weight, rest, and the use of canes or walkers. 		<p>Anatomical site, laterality, and type of OA Specify whether osteoarthritis is primary, secondary, or post traumatic, otherwise it will be coded as unspecified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Affected sites: hands, neck, weight-bearing joints (knees, feet, and hips), wrists, elbows, shoulders, and spine. ▪ Age of onset is usually around 50–60 and progresses gradually over time. ▪ Imaging Tests: X-rays and, in complex cases, MRI. ▪ Treatment/Surgical: Injections (cortisone or lubrication), joint replacement, viscosupplementation, and realignment of bones. Acetaminophen, NSAIDS, and Duloxetine. ▪ Therapy: Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS); physical and occupational therapy.

Documentation and Coding: Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis

Coding Examples

Case 1	ICD-10 Codes	Rationale
<p>Patient here for follow-up of rheumatoid factor lab results; Hx- depression, muscle spasms, and herniated disc with myelopathy; Labs: Serology-Rheumatoid Factor positive; Exam: Musculoskeletal—pain and swelling in both hands and feet, all other systems—negative; A/P: Seropositive rheumatoid arthritis, both hands and both feet</p>	<p>M05.841 – Other rheumatoid arthritis with rheumatoid factor of right hand</p> <p>M05.842 – Other rheumatoid arthritis with rheumatoid factor of left hand</p> <p>M05.871 – Other rheumatoid arthritis with rheumatoid factor of right ankle and foot</p> <p>M05.872 – Other rheumatoid arthritis with rheumatoid factor of left ankle and foot</p>	<p>Seropositive rheumatoid arthritis has sufficient supporting documentation as it was only listed in the Assessment/Plan (A/P) with anatomical site specified. Lab results positive for rheumatoid factor.</p>

Case 2	ICD-10 Codes	AHA Coding Clinic (Volume 3, Fourth Quarter, 2016)
<p>A patient is admitted for a total knee replacement due to osteoarthritis of the left knee. It appears that the index entries for osteoarthritis of most sites leads to the primary osteoarthritis (OA) codes. What is the correct code assignment for OA of the left knee?</p>	<p>M17.12 – Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, left knee</p>	<p>Although the index references an unspecified code (M17.9), when reviewing the tabular list, it is important to review other codes in the related area to determine whether a more specific code can be assigned. M17.12 is a more specific code, which fully captures the diagnostic statement.</p>

Case 3	ICD-10 Codes	AHA Coding Clinic (Volume 3, Fourth Quarter, 2016)
<p>A patient presents with bilateral osteoarthritis of the hips. The index entry directs to code M16.0, which is primary osteoarthritis. Should a code for bilateral primary osteoarthritis be assigned?</p>	<p>M16.0 – Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of hip</p>	<p>When the type of osteoarthritis is not specified, primary is the default.</p>

Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis

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.com/providers).

References

- [ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines, FY 2023](#)
- <https://www.hopkinsarthritis.org/arthritis-info/rheumatoid-arthritis/ra-symptoms/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/osteoarthritis/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20351930>
- <https://health.usnews.com/conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/rheumatoid-arthritis-tests>
- <https://www.codingclinicadvisor.com/>