Major Depressive Disorder

Overview: Diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder is based on DSM-5 criteria

- Five or more symptoms during the same 2-week period and at least one of the symptoms should be either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.
- The PHQ-9 is a tool that compiles the DSM-5 criteria into a usable questionnaire for patients in a primary care office.

Once the diagnosis of major depression is made, the diagnostic code is documented with respect to the pattern (single/recurrent), severity (mild/moderate/severe), or remission status (partial/full) based on the prior two week’s history.

- MDD, single episode describes the first episode of MDD
- MDD, recurrent describes any subsequent episode following the first single episode with full remission being achieved after the first single episode with subsequent return of symptoms.
  - Consider using the PHQ-9 to assist with determining severity of active, symptomatic depression.
  - Partial remission describes either circumstances in which the full criteria for MDD diagnosis are not met, or a time frame of less than two months without the presence of significant symptoms.
  - Full remission: No significant signs or symptoms of the disturbance have been present for 2 or more months.

Pearl: a patient can be considered in remission even if they are actively receiving treatment for depression.

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) Depression Severity Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>0-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-14</th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>20-27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Severe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Example Documentation

Major depression, moderate recurrent (F33.1). Depression has returned due to life situation. PHQ-9 today of 15. Will restart SSRI, referral for counseling and return to clinic in 2 weeks for recheck. Strict return precautions discussed for worsening or progression of symptoms.

Pearl: The severity/remission status of depression is fluid over time as it reflects the patient’s clinical status during the encounter.

Pearl: Patients with PHQ-9 score of less than 5 for greater than 2 months can be considered in full remission even if they are receiving treatment.

Pearl: Identify the most specific code that applies to the patient at the time of the visit with respect to the pattern (single/recurrent), severity (mild/mod/severe) or remission status (partial/full) based on the prior two week’s history.

Pearl: It is important to document if the patient declines either medication or other recommended treatment, particularly if a medication is not being prescribed and the depression is not in remission.

Resources: American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.); UpToDate; ACDIS (acdis.org)