

Descriptors in your chart history: You can only count descriptors once in any area



When you are auditing the history of a patient, the condition often does not fit neatly in one category. Can you use the same condition more than once in placing your descriptor? No - whichever category you place the descriptor, the descriptor should only be used one time, in other words, no double dipping

Here's an example:

A 42-year-old male, normally in good health, goes to the emergency room with coughing and choking spells.

He farms and has been exposed to a lot of dust. He also has been running the air conditioner in the combine cab, which tends to give him some difficulty. Last night he was unable to sleep and he got very frightened because he felt like he could not breathe. He was not able to sleep properly for the last two days.

In the chart below, we have placed some descriptors in categories. However, two of the descriptors -- exposed to dust, and not able to sleep -- have potential to be in two categories. You could consider the "exposed to dust" as context as it is a circumstance in which the event occurs, or you could consider it a modifying factor, since it changes or alters the complaint, in this case it aggravates the difficulty breathing. But you can't put it in both.

March 1998

Physician Practice Codes

You could also consider the statement "not able to sleep" to be a modifying factor, since again it alters or changes the state, or an associated sign or symptom, or an indication of the severity of the problem.

HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS (HPI)
Location:
Quality:
Severity: so much trouble, he felt could not breathe
Duration: yesterday
Timing:
Context: farms, running the air conditioner, <i>exposed to dust</i>
Modifying factors: <i>exposed to dust, not able to sleep</i>
Associated signs, symptoms: coughing and choking spells, <i>not able to sleep</i>