

General Guidance With Vague Chief Complaints

Chief Complaints Associated With Trauma/Injury

The Physician Documentation Integrity Pocket Card



General Documentation Guidance for Inpatients

Role of Provider

Documentation is a critical component of patient care and is essential for ensuring continuity of care, communication among healthcare providers, and legal protection. The following guidance outlines the role of the provider in documentation for inpatients.

Documentation Requirements:

- History and Physical (H&P):** The H&P should be completed and documented by the provider or a qualified medical professional under the provider's supervision. It should include a thorough history of the present illness, past medical history, social history, and family history, as well as a complete physical examination.
- Assessment and Plan:** The provider should document a clear assessment of the patient's condition and a specific plan of care, including diagnostic tests, treatments, and follow-up instructions.
- Progress Notes:** The provider should document the patient's progress over time, including changes in symptoms, response to treatment, and any complications.
- Communication:** The provider should document all communication with other healthcare providers, including consultations, rounds, and handoffs.
- Consent:** The provider should document the patient's informed consent to any procedure or treatment.
- Discharge Planning:** The provider should document the patient's discharge plan, including discharge instructions, follow-up care, and any necessary referrals.

Documentation Standards:

- Accuracy:** Documentation should be accurate and reflect the actual patient care provided.
- Timeliness:** Documentation should be completed in a timely manner, ideally at the time of the patient encounter.
- Clarity:** Documentation should be clear and concise, using appropriate medical terminology and avoiding abbreviations that are not universally understood.
- Completeness:** Documentation should be complete, capturing all relevant information about the patient's care.
- Legibility:** Documentation should be legible and easy to read.

Documentation Tools:

- Electronic Health Records (EHR):** The EHR is the primary tool for documentation and should be used consistently and accurately.
- Documentation Templates:** Documentation templates can be helpful in ensuring that all necessary information is captured, but they should be used flexibly to accommodate individual patient needs.
- Checklists:** Checklists can be used to ensure that all required documentation elements are completed.

Documentation Challenges:

- Time Constraints:** Time constraints are a common challenge in documentation, but it is essential to prioritize and complete documentation for each patient encounter.
- Documentation Fatigue:** Documentation fatigue can lead to errors and incomplete documentation. Taking breaks and using efficient documentation strategies can help reduce fatigue.
- Communication Barriers:** Communication barriers, such as language differences or hearing impairments, can make documentation more difficult. Using interpreters and other communication aids can help overcome these barriers.

Documentation Best Practices:

- Use Standardized Terminology:** Using standardized terminology, such as ICD-10 codes and SNOMED CT terms, can improve the accuracy and consistency of documentation.
- Document in Real Time:** Documenting in real time, rather than retrospectively, can help ensure accuracy and reduce the risk of errors.
- Collaborate with Other Providers:** Collaborating with other healthcare providers can help ensure that all relevant information is captured and that the patient's care is coordinated.
- Seek Feedback:** Seeking feedback from colleagues and supervisors can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that documentation practices are up to date.

Documentation and Patient Safety:

Documentation is a critical component of patient safety. Accurate and complete documentation helps ensure that all healthcare providers have access to the information they need to provide safe and effective care. It also helps identify and prevent medical errors and adverse events.

Documentation and Quality Improvement:

Documentation is also essential for quality improvement. By analyzing documentation patterns and trends, healthcare organizations can identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance the quality of patient care.

Documentation and Legal Protection:

Documentation is also a key component of legal protection. Accurate and complete documentation provides a clear record of the patient's care and can be used to defend against malpractice claims.

Documentation and Research:

Documentation is also essential for research. Accurate and complete documentation provides the data needed to conduct research and improve patient care.

Documentation and Education:

Documentation is also a valuable tool for education. By reviewing documentation, healthcare providers can learn from their colleagues and improve their own documentation skills.

Documentation and Patient Engagement:

Documentation is also essential for patient engagement. By providing patients with access to their own documentation, healthcare organizations can help patients understand their care and participate more actively in their own health decisions.

Documentation and the Future of Healthcare:

As healthcare continues to evolve, documentation will remain a critical component of patient care. Embracing new technologies and best practices in documentation will help ensure that healthcare organizations are providing the highest quality of care to their patients.

Chief complaint: Pain or injury

Alternative diagnosis	Key documentation points
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Fracture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of mechanism of injury Location and description of pain Physical exam findings (tenderness, swelling, deformity, etc.) Imaging studies (X-ray, CT, MRI) Assessment of neurovascular status Plan of care (analgesia, immobilization, etc.)
Soft tissue injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of mechanism of injury Location and description of pain Physical exam findings (tenderness, swelling, bruising, etc.) Imaging studies (X-ray, MRI) Assessment of neurovascular status Plan of care (analgesia, rest, etc.)
Internal injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of mechanism of injury Location and description of pain Physical exam findings (tenderness, guarding, etc.) Imaging studies (X-ray, CT, MRI) Assessment of neurovascular status Plan of care (analgesia, surgery, etc.)
Spinal cord injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of mechanism of injury Location and description of pain Physical exam findings (tenderness, swelling, deformity, etc.) Imaging studies (X-ray, CT, MRI) Assessment of neurovascular status Plan of care (analgesia, immobilization, etc.)

Documentation should include a clear assessment of the patient's condition and a specific plan of care, including diagnostic tests, treatments, and follow-up instructions.

Documentation should be complete, capturing all relevant information about the patient's care.

Documentation should be legible and easy to read.

Documentation should be accurate and reflect the actual patient care provided.

Documentation should be completed in a timely manner, ideally at the time of the patient encounter.

Documentation should be clear and concise, using appropriate medical terminology and avoiding abbreviations that are not universally understood.

Documentation should be complete, capturing all relevant information about the patient's care.

Documentation should be legible and easy to read.

Documentation should be accurate and reflect the actual patient care provided.

Documentation should be completed in a timely manner, ideally at the time of the patient encounter.

Documentation should be clear and concise, using appropriate medical terminology and avoiding abbreviations that are not universally understood.

Chief complaint: Syncope, weakness, lethargy, etc.

Alternative diagnoses	Key documentation points
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Cardiovascular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of symptoms Physical exam findings (vital signs, heart sounds, etc.) ECG Imaging studies (echocardiogram, etc.) Assessment of hemodynamic stability Plan of care (fluids, medications, etc.)
Neurological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of symptoms Physical exam findings (vital signs, neurological exam, etc.) Imaging studies (CT, MRI) Assessment of neurovascular status Plan of care (analgesia, etc.)
Endocrine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of symptoms Physical exam findings (vital signs, etc.) Lab studies (glucose, electrolytes, etc.) Assessment of metabolic status Plan of care (fluids, electrolyte replacement, etc.)
Infectious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of symptoms Physical exam findings (vital signs, etc.) Lab studies (CBC, cultures, etc.) Assessment of infection Plan of care (antibiotics, fluids, etc.)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of symptoms Physical exam findings (vital signs, etc.) Lab studies (CBC, etc.) Assessment of other causes Plan of care (analgesia, etc.)

Chief Complaints Associated With Circulatory Issues

Chief complaint: Shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Dizziness Fatigue Swelling in legs Palpitations Irregular heartbeat Weakness Headaches Nausea Blurred vision Excessive sweating Unexplained weight gain Increased thirst Increased urination Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor
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Chief complaint: **Dehydration, weakness, etc.**

Alternative diagnoses	Key documentation points
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Alternative diagnoses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dehydration Weakness Fatigue Headaches Dizziness Blurred vision Excessive sweating Unexplained weight gain Increased thirst Increased urination Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor
Key documentation points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Dizziness Fatigue Swelling in legs Palpitations Irregular heartbeat Weakness Headaches Nausea Blurred vision Excessive sweating Unexplained weight gain Increased thirst Increased urination Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Dizziness Fatigue Swelling in legs Palpitations Irregular heartbeat Weakness Headaches Nausea Blurred vision Excessive sweating Unexplained weight gain Increased thirst Increased urination Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor
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Chief Complaints Associated With Respiratory Issues

Chief complaint: Shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Cough Wheezing Stridor Hoarseness Pharyngitis Tonsillitis Tracheitis Bronchitis Asthma Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Pneumonia Pulmonary embolism Heart failure Acid reflux Allergies Smoking Environmental factors Genetic factors Age-related changes Sex-related changes Race-related changes Ethnicity-related changes Socioeconomic factors Education level Healthcare access Insurance status Comorbidities Medication use Substance use Stress Anxiety Depression Chronic pain Disability Quality of life Functional status Activity level Sleep patterns Dietary habits Exercise routine Work environment Home environment Community environment Global environment Climate change Seasonal allergies Travel history Recent hospitalizations Recent surgeries Recent trauma Recent infections Recent vaccinations Recent laboratory tests Recent imaging studies Recent consultations Recent referrals Recent admissions Recent discharges Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces
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Chief complaint: **Shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, etc.**

Alternative diagnoses	Key documentation points
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Alternative diagnoses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Cough Wheezing Stridor Hoarseness Pharyngitis Tonsillitis Tracheitis Bronchitis Asthma Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Pneumonia Pulmonary embolism Heart failure Acid reflux Allergies Smoking Environmental factors Genetic factors Age-related changes Sex-related changes Race-related changes Ethnicity-related changes Socioeconomic factors Education level Healthcare access Insurance status Comorbidities Medication use Substance use Stress Anxiety Depression Chronic pain Disability Quality of life Functional status Activity level Sleep patterns Dietary habits Exercise routine Work environment Home environment Community environment Global environment Climate change Seasonal allergies Travel history Recent hospitalizations Recent surgeries Recent trauma Recent infections Recent vaccinations Recent laboratory tests Recent imaging studies Recent consultations Recent referrals Recent admissions Recent discharges Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces
Key documentation points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Chest pain Cough Wheezing Stridor Hoarseness Pharyngitis Tonsillitis Tracheitis Bronchitis Asthma Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Pneumonia Pulmonary embolism Heart failure Acid reflux Allergies Smoking Environmental factors Genetic factors Age-related changes Sex-related changes Race-related changes Ethnicity-related changes Socioeconomic factors Education level Healthcare access Insurance status Comorbidities Medication use Substance use Stress Anxiety Depression Chronic pain Disability Quality of life Functional status Activity level Sleep patterns Dietary habits Exercise routine Work environment Home environment Community environment Global environment Climate change Seasonal allergies Travel history Recent hospitalizations Recent surgeries Recent trauma Recent infections Recent vaccinations Recent laboratory tests Recent imaging studies Recent consultations Recent referrals Recent admissions Recent discharges Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces

Chief Complaints Associated With Neurological Issues

Chief complaint: Headaches, dizziness, weakness, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Dizziness Weakness Fatigue Blurred vision Double vision Nausea Vomiting Diarrhea Constipation Abdominal pain Changes in skin color Changes in skin temperature Changes in skin texture Changes in skin moisture Changes in skin elasticity Changes in skin turgor
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Chief complaint: **Altered mental status (AMS)**

AMS diagnoses	Key documentation points
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AMS diagnoses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Altered mental status (AMS) Confusion Disorientation Agitation Delirium Coma Seizures Stroke Trauma Infection Medication Substance use Stress Anxiety Depression Chronic pain Disability Quality of life Functional status Activity level Sleep patterns Dietary habits Exercise routine Work environment Home environment Community environment Global environment Climate change Seasonal allergies Travel history Recent hospitalizations Recent surgeries Recent trauma Recent infections Recent vaccinations Recent laboratory tests Recent imaging studies Recent consultations Recent referrals Recent admissions Recent discharges Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces
Key documentation points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Altered mental status (AMS) Confusion Disorientation Agitation Delirium Coma Seizures Stroke Trauma Infection Medication Substance use Stress Anxiety Depression Chronic pain Disability Quality of life Functional status Activity level Sleep patterns Dietary habits Exercise routine Work environment Home environment Community environment Global environment Climate change Seasonal allergies Travel history Recent hospitalizations Recent surgeries Recent trauma Recent infections Recent vaccinations Recent laboratory tests Recent imaging studies Recent consultations Recent referrals Recent admissions Recent discharges Recent deaths Recent births Recent marriages Recent divorces