ULTIMATE HEALTH PLANS

Sick Sinus Syndrome

Clinical overview, ICD -10 CM and documentation tips for providers

Sick sinus syndrome or sinus node dysfunction is a condition in which the sinus node is unable to create a heart rate that the body needs. Arrhythmias are are caused as a result of this. The sinus node is located in the upper right chamber of the heart, the heartbeat is controlled in this area. The pace of your heart changes depending on your activity such as exercise, emotions, rest, and other factors. For patients who are diagnosed with sick sinus syndrome the electronic signals are abnormally paced; too slow, too fast, or interrupted with long pauses.

Different types of problems of sinus node:

- **Sinus bradycardia**- Electric charge produced by the sinus node to slow down the heart rate.
- **Sinus arrest** - Signals are paused resulting in skipped heartbeats.
- **Sinoatrial exit block**- The signals to the upper heart chambers are blocked or slow down also causing skipped heartbeats.
- **Chronotropic incompetence**- The heart rate does not increase with physical activity; it remains normal at rest stays at the pace.
- **Bradycardia-tachycardia syndrome**- The heart rate goes abnormally slow and fast rhythms with asystole or long pause between heartbeats.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fainting or near fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Confusion
- Bradycardia
- Palpitations

If you are experiencing unexplained chest pain or suspect you are having a heart attack, call for emergency medical help, dial 911 immediately.

Risk Factors:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Excess body weight
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Use of illegal drugs.
- Heavy alcohol use
- Stress
- Poor diet, (intaking food with high calories, grease, and sweets)

Diagnostic Testing:

- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Holter monitor
- Event recorder
- Other monitors
- Implantable loop recorder

Treatment:

- Medications
- Surgeries to input cardiac devices, see details below:
  - Pacemaker- a small device implanted under the skin in the upper chest- computer senses heart rates and when it is out of rhythm it will send out electrical pulses to maintain the heart at a steady rate.

- Automatic implantable cardioverter defibrillator (AICD)- computer sense senses heart rates too fast or out of rhythm, sends a shock to return heart back into rhythm.
- Cardiac device interrogation: Verifies that the device is programmed and assesses battery and lead function.

- AV node ablation
- Cardiac ablation for A-fib
- Healthy diet
- Exercise

Clinical Documentation and Coding Tips

- Always document it to the highest level of specificity
- SOAP Notes documentation tips:
- **Subjective** – Document the presence or absence of any current symptoms related to Sick Sinus Syndrome.
- **Objective** – Document signs and symptoms and labs/test results related to Sick Sinus Syndrome present at the time of the visit. (such as "irregularly or irregular" rhythm or increased heart rate, EKG results).
- **Assessment** – Document final diagnosis clearly, concisely, and to the highest level of specificity the Sick Sinus Syndrome is present.
- **Plan** – Document and link all medications used to treat the Sick Sinus Syndrome. Detail any referrals, consultations, labs, or diagnostic testing requested.

Medicare Hierarchal Condition Categories (HCC)

Hierarchical condition category (HCC) coding is a risk-adjustment model designed to estimate future health care costs for patients. This model filters ICD-10CM codes into diagnosis groups (DxGs), and then into Conditions Categories (CCs). Hierarchies or families are placed to gain an HCC numeric code, which translates to a risk adjustment factor (RAF) value. Each diagnosis code found in the model, as a stand-alone diagnosis code or within a family or hierarchy, carries a value through RAF, but this value can change if the patient has other influencing factors such as ESRD, hospice, or are dual-eligible. Families or hierarchies set a value based on the severity of illness, with more severe diagnoses carrying the overall risk score for that family. Diagnoses within families or hierarchies are inclusive of one another, while any additional diagnoses from other hierarchies or stand-alone diagnoses are additive and increase each patient's overall risk score.

Sick Sinus Syndrome is a chronic condition that falls within the category " *Specified Heart Arrhythmias*" (HCC 96) with an average RAF Score of 0.384.

Coding Sick Sinus Syndrome

ICD-10 Code	Code description
I49.5	Sick Sinus Syndrome

Always Remember

- If a patient is diagnosed with SSS and has a Pacemaker, also code "Presence of Cardiac Pacemaker" (Z95.0)
- The entire record must be reviewed to verify sick sinus syndrome as a current condition.
- Sinus bradycardia is described with additional terms then Sick Sinus syndrome I49.5 applies.
- Sick sinus syndrome includes tachycardia-bradycardia syndrome.
- A visit to evaluate the Sick Sinus Syndrome symptoms or the pacemaker in situ, report SSS (I49.5) and the cardiac pacemaker in situ.