AAVBC

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF VALUE BASED CARE

Brain Cancer

Quick Reference Guide

2026

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1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Definition: Malignant brain cancer includes **primary tumors** arising within the brain or central nervous system and **secondary/metastatic tumors** that spread to the brain from another primary site. Common primary malignant brain tumors include **glioblastoma, astrocytoma, oligodendroglioma, and other CNS malignancies**. Brain metastases most often arise from lung, breast, melanoma, kidney, and colorectal cancers. Final diagnosis depends on imaging, pathology, histology, and molecular classification.[1]

ICD-10 Codes:

Primary brain malignancy is coded by anatomic site: **C71.0-C71.9**. Use the most specific location available from imaging or pathology, such as frontal lobe **(C71.1)**, temporal lobe **(C71.2)**, parietal lobe **(C71.3)**, occipital lobe **(C71.4),** cerebellum (C71.6), brain stem **(C71.7)**, overlapping sites **(C71.8)**, or unspecified site **(C71.9)** only when location is not documented. Secondary/metastatic brain malignancy is coded **C79.31** and should be documented with the primary malignancy when known. **Z85.841** applies only after treatment is complete and there is no evidence of active disease, treatment, or surveillance.[2]

Prevalence and Burden: The American Cancer Society projects approximately **24,740 new cases** and **18,350 deaths** from malignant brain and spinal cord tumors in the United States in 2026, accounting for roughly 1.2% of all new cancer diagnoses.[3] The overall **5-year relative survival rate is approximately 32.9%**, and the average age at diagnosis is **61 years**—about 9 in 10 cases occur in adults.[3] **Glioblastoma**, the most common malignant primary brain tumor, is disproportionately a disease of older adults: patients **≥65 years** represent approximately one-third of all glioblastoma cases.[4,5] GBD 2021 US data show the highest disability-adjusted life-year (DALY) rate in males aged 70–74 (**516.96 per 100,000; 95% UI 491.24-539.07**), confirming concentrated burden in the Medicare population.[6] In a SEER analysis of **40,582 glioblastoma patients** (2000–2021), median overall survival for patients **>65 years** was **4 months** (95% CI 4–4) versus **19 months** (95% CI 18–20) for patients **≤65 years**; older age was associated with **HR 1.72** (95% CI 1.68–1.75; $p < 0.001$) for mortality.[7]

HCC/RAF V28 Mapping

ICD-10 CODE(S)	HCC CATEGORY (V28)	RAF (CNA)	DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENT
C71.0-C71.9 Primary brain malignancy	**HCC 20 — Lung and Other Severe Cancers**[2]	**1.136**	Document active **primary brain malignancy** explicitly: "glioblastoma," "malignant glioma," "astrocytoma," or "oligodendroglioma" — not only "mass" or "lesion." Specify **anatomic site**, laterality when applicable, histologic confirmation, molecular markers, and active treatment/surveillance status[2]

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