AAVBC
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF VALUE BASED CARE

Myelodysplastic Syndromes

Quick Reference Guide

2026

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1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Definition: Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) are a heterogeneous group of clonal hematopoietic stem-cell malignancies in which ineffective hematopoiesis produces one or more persistent peripheral **cytopenias**, morphologic **dysplasia** in the bone marrow, and a variable risk of progression to acute myeloid leukemia (AML).[1] Diagnosis integrates clinical, morphologic, cytogenetic, and molecular data; bone marrow aspirate and biopsy are required to confirm MDS.[1] The **boundary with AML is defined by blast percentage**: MDS carries **<20% blasts**, while **≥20% blasts** defines AML.[1] Because the disease is biologically diverse, the central caution for primary care is to avoid oversimplifying it as a single anemia of aging.

ICD-10 Codes:

MDS is reported under the **D46** category, with subtype-specific codes that should reflect bone marrow and cytogenetic findings: **D46.0** (refractory anemia without ring sideroblasts), **D46.1** (refractory anemia with ring sideroblasts), **D46.20** (RAEB, unspecified), **D46.21** (RAEB-1, blasts 5-9%),[2] **D46.22** (RAEB-2, blasts 10-19%),[2] **D46.4** (refractory anemia, unspecified), **D46.A** (refractory cytopenia with multilineage dysplasia), **D46.B** (multilineage dysplasia with ring sideroblasts), **D46.C** (MDS with isolated del(5q)), **D46.Z** (other MDS), and **D46.9** (MDS, unspecified). When MDS transforms to AML (>=20% blasts),[1] the code must be updated from **D46.x** to the appropriate **C92.x** code. Suspected or probable MDS should be coded to the documented sign or symptom until a marrow-confirmed diagnosis is established.

Prevalence and Burden: MDS is predominantly a disease of older adults - more than **85%** of cases occur in persons 60 years or older, with a median age at diagnosis of roughly **70-77 years**.[4] SEER-based incidence is about **4 per 100,000/year** overall and near **25 per 100,000/year** in adults aged >=65.[5] Claims-based methods place the true incidence in adults ≥65 substantially higher (approximately **75 per 100,000/year**) reflecting significant registry under-documentation.[6] Overall 5-year survival is approximately **37%**; lower-risk MDS carries a median survival of **3-10 years**, while higher-risk MDS carries a median survival of **<3 years**.[5]

HCC/RAF V28 Mapping

ICD-10 CODE(S)	HCC CATEGORY (V28)	RAF (CNA)	DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENT
D46.0 Refractory anemia without ring sideroblasts	**HCC 19** Myelodysplastic Syndromes/Multiple Myeloma/and Other Cancers	**1.798**	Document WHO-aligned bone marrow findings **(erythroid dysplasia, no ring sideroblasts, <5% blasts, cytogenetics)** and persistent anemia despite adequate nutritional supplementation

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