

Encephalopathy

Encephalopathy is defined as global cerebral dysfunction in the absence of structural brain disease. This diagnosis may be caused by infection, metabolic disorders, mitochondrial disorders, brain tumor, brain pressure, chronic progressive trauma, poor nutrition, lack of oxygen to brain or prolonged exposure to toxic elements.

Types of Encephalopathy include:

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| Septic Encephalopathy | Metabolic Encephalopathy |
| Toxic Encephalopathy | Hypertensive Encephalopathy |
| Hepatic Encephalopathy | Anoxic Encephalopathy |
| Hypoglycemic Encephalopathy | Traumatic Encephalopathy |

When caring for a patient with altered mentation, consider if the patient's altered mental status is due to one of the above conditions/diagnoses.

Encephalopathy is a highly audited diagnosis due to over use and over coding. The diagnosis should warrant treatment of the underlying condition. Beware if the patient has dementia or mental status changes due to medication administration: simple confusion, lethargy or somnolence is not encephalopathy.

This documentation will support your patient being as sick on paper as they are in the bed.

Reference: <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/acute-toxic-metabolic-encephalopathy-in-adults>

Chen, R, Young, GB. Metabolic Encephalopathies. In: Bolton, CF, Young, GB, (Eds), Baillere's Clinical Neurology, Balliere Tindall, London 1996. p.577.