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Principal Diagnosis

“The condition established after study to be chiefly responsible for occasioning the admission of the patient to the hospital for care”

Consider what is the main reason the patient could not go home or the main problem that “bought the bed”

Remember: the diagnosis must be **present on admission** (POA) to be considered the principal diagnosis

- Consider using possible, probable, likely or suspected diagnoses

Ex: If SIRS criteria are present on admission with a patient who has an infection, consider documenting “possible sepsis”. Remember to go back and clarify the next day.

Ex: The patient was admitted to the hospital after an episode of nausea and vomiting resulting in her throwing up an oral antibiotic she was initially prescribed for a urinary tract infection. After further investigation, however, it appears that the nausea and vomiting were likely related to a small bowel obstruction which was later ascribed to a gallstone ileus which then required surgical intervention for complete resolution. In this case, it was not the urinary tract infection that necessitated hospital admission but the nausea and vomiting which were most likely related to her gallstone ileus.