

Documentation Guide: Symptoms vs. Impressions

Symptoms

eSituation.09 – Primary Symptom NEMSIS definition: *The primary sign and symptom present in the patient or observed by EMS personnel.*

eSituation.10- Other Associated Symptoms NEMSIS definition: *Other symptoms identified by the patient or observed by EMS personnel. (Multiple selections allowed)*

Additional details: These fields capture the indications of an injury or medical condition that you observe in the patient and/or the experience reported by the patient, which inform your impressions.

Examples: Signs include physical findings that you can observe or measure such as bradycardia, abnormal involuntary movements, fever, slurred speech etc. Symptoms include sensations reported by the patient such as pain, nausea, stress, etc.

Note: The details of certain signs should be documented under Provider Actions→ Vitals (ie- HR, RR), and Provider Actions→ Assessments (ie- findings from physical assessment).

Impressions

eSituation.11 – Primary Impression NEMSIS definition: *The EMS personnel's impression of the patient's primary problem or most significant condition which led to the management given to the patient (treatments, medications, or procedures).*

eSituation.12 – Secondary Impression NEMSIS definition: *The EMS personnel's impression of the patient's secondary problem(s) or most significant condition(s) which led to the management given to the patient (treatments, medications, or procedures). (Multiple selections allowed)*

Additional details: These fields are akin to diagnoses. Impressions are based on a comprehensive evaluation of a patient's signs, symptoms, medical history, etc and should describe what is causing the signs and symptoms.

Example: Based on signs/symptoms like slurred speech, bradycardia, and observations like scent, you could assign a Primary impression of alcohol intoxication

Example: Based on signs/symptoms like abnormal involuntary movements, urinary incontinence, tachycardia, you could assign a Primary impression of seizures.

Example of use of Provider Impressions and Symptoms

You are dispatched for a ground level fall. Your patient hit their head when they fell and they are presenting with confusion and a hematoma on the scalp.

- Primary Impression = head injury, unspecified
- Secondary Impression = altered mental status
- Primary Symptom – disoriented/confusion
- Other Associated Symptoms: pain- acute pain due to trauma
- The specifics of the hematoma should be documented within Provider Actions - Assessment section, under Head Assessment

Our goal is to keep the list of Symptoms and Impressions as distinct as possible- though there may be some overlap at times. If you have suggestions for these lists, please submit them through the [Suggestion Box](#)