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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

Depression is a psychiatric disorder characterized by emotional, physical and cognitive symptoms that significantly impact an individual's functioning. The identification of depression from administrative data relies on the use of diagnostic codes. In this study, we present and compare the diagnostic codes employed in Alberta to identify depression or major depressive disorder and explore the challenges associated with the variations in these coding systems.

METHODS

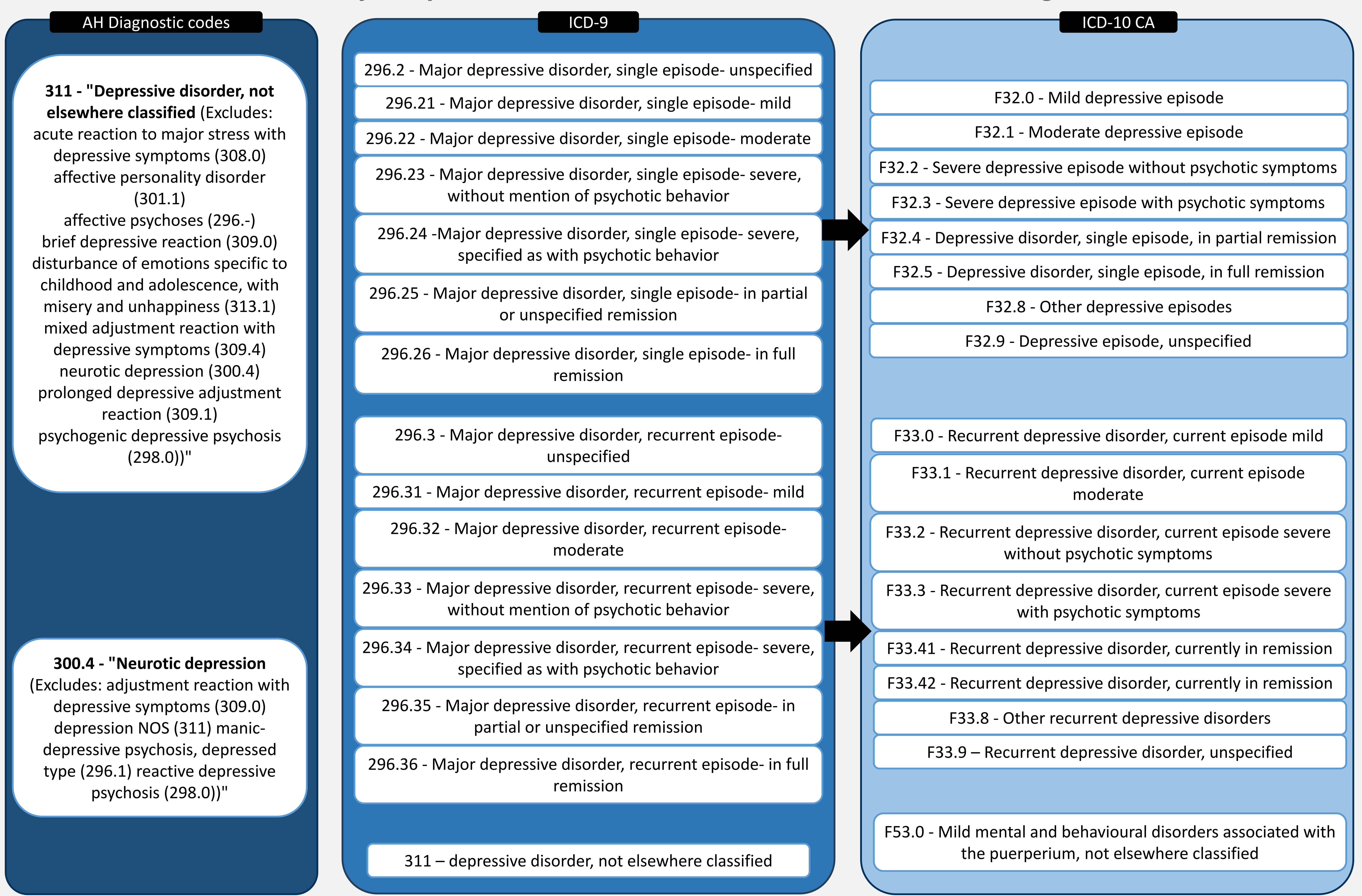
Utilising using health care administrative data of patients diagnosed with depression between 2012 and 2022. We identified depression using three diagnostic codes: the ICD-10 CA (Canadian version of ICD-10) ; ICD-9 CA codes; Alberta Health (AH) diagnostic codes with utilizes a combination of Claims data and ICD-9 codes.

CHALLENGES/RESULTS

Table 1: Characteristics of the diagnostic codes for major depressive disorder in Alberta

	AH Diagnostic Code	IDC-9 CA	IDC-10 CA
Data source:	Claims data	Claims data	National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS) & Discharge abstract database (DAAD)
Coverage:	Covers all patients in AB		Only covers patients admitted through emergency departments into hospital care
Format	Numeric up to 1 decimal place	Numeric with up to 2 decimal places	Alphanumeric categories

Table 1: Documentation of major depressive disorder: ICD 10, ICD 9 and Alberta Health diagnostic codes



LESSONS LEARNED

Measures to enhance data accuracy and support informed healthcare decisions should be pursued including:

- Coding systems across healthcare data sources should be standardized
- Robust crosswalk tools for accurate translation between ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes should be used
- Data collection should be expanded to include both hospital and outpatient settings
- Training and support for healthcare providers on diagnostic coding should be provided
- Ongoing research to evaluate coding systems and translation tools should be conducted
- Clear policies and guidelines for the use of diagnostic codes in administrative data are essential steps should be developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is supported by a financial contribution from the Government of Alberta via the Physician Learning Program. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Government of Alberta.