The Debility Dilemma: Guidance for Hospice Physicians  
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Choose the diagnosis “most contributory” to the terminal illness as the primary diagnosis with all other related conditions in the additional diagnoses fields for hospice claims reporting.

**Action Steps: New Admissions:**
1. No longer use debility or adult failure to thrive (AFTT) as primary diagnosis
2. Look for **clues** to identify the primary diagnosis most contributory to the patient’s terminal disease trajectory
3. Where possible, use other conditions, whether related or not, to support a 6-month prognosis
4. For primary diagnosis, consider using the one a physician would list as cause of death on the death certificate

**Action Steps: Current Patients**
1. Identify all patients admitted under debility, AFTT, or “Symptoms, signs, and ill-defined conditions” (ICD codes 780-799)
2. Review each clinical record to find clues to an alternate diagnosis
   a. Review POC to determine body system, symptoms, and psychosocial/spiritual issues requiring most palliative interventions
   b. Review medication list
   c. Try to identify the primary diagnosis most contributory to the patient’s terminal disease trajectory
3. For primary diagnosis, consider using the one a physician would list as the proximal cause of death on the death certificate
4. If the patient has no clear alternate diagnosis supported by clinical documentation and if the plan of care has not changed over time to reflect end-of-life symptom management, consider discharging the patient

**Determine:**
- What dx is most likely leading to the patient’s demise?
- What are the patient’s co-morbid conditions?
- What medications is the patient on?
- What is the nature of the patient’s decline?
- Do you believe it is more likely than not that the patient will have a terminal event in the next 6 months?
- Does the patient also suffer from debility?

**Document:**
- Primary diagnosis
- Secondary diagnoses contributing to prognosis
- Trajectory of decline
- Goals of care, including wishes for DNR and no measures to prolong life