

Connecticut Coders Quarterly

Newsletter of the Connecticut Chapter of the AAPC

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Issue 1

Welcome to Our First Newsletter

I would like to personally welcome you to our new Connecticut Chapter AAPC Newsletter. We are pleased to introduce our first issue of our chapter's newsletter. Here you will find tips and resources on coding material as well as information on upcoming events. I would like to thank the Newsletter committee for their commitment to making this newsletter possible. This Newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis. Comments and feedback are welcome.

Sincerely,

Theresa A. Cicarella, CPC
President, Connecticut Chapter

Overview of Joint AAPC Meeting

Lynn Festa, CPC & Bev Bakes, CPC

The topic of the AAPC meeting held on June 27th at Bridgeport Hospital, and sponsored by the Southwestern Chapter & Connecticut Chapter, was "Compliance and Effective Implementation". The speaker, Attorney Ronald Nyman, is President of MediStar Billing Center. He was a dynamic and informative speaker.

Here are some of the highlights.

The Goals of Compliance: a centralized process to detect and prevent illegal conduct

See *Overview* on page 2

Bulletin Board

This section of our quarterly Newsletter will be used to make announcements relevant to upcoming events. (i.e. exam dates, meetings, special events).

Exams

The Chapter sponsors the CPC and CPC-H exam twice a year. Recently, the exam was held on September 29, 2001. The next scheduled exam will be held on Saturday, March 23, 2002. The location is to be announced.

Upcoming Meetings **October 25th**

Please come and play "Compliance Jeopardy" with us! The game will take place at the next Chapter meeting, to be held at 8:am in the Brady Auditorium at Yale University. The Compliance Department from the Yale Medical Group has developed this program. The program is not only educational, it is also a lot of fun!

Elections

Beginning in October, the Chapter will begin accepting nominations for the offices of President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Please let an officer know if you wish to nominate someone for one of these positions. The vote will take place on December 12, 2001. The nominated officers will begin their assignments in January of 2002.

Overview cont.

and a process to promote honest, ethical behavior.

The Key Players: Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), Office of Inspector General (OIG), Office of Audit Services (OAS), Department of Justice (DOJ), FEB, Postal Inspectors, and others.

Mr. Nyman also spoke about the Civil False Claims Act (title 31), Civil & Criminal Penalties, Anti-Kickback Statute and Self-Referral Statute (STARK) (all in Title 42).

Some of the websites mentioned in the handouts were:

Medicare –

www.hcfa.gov/medicare/incardir.htm

Medicaid –

www.hhs.gov/oig/oi/mfcu/index.htm

Office of Inspector General – U.S.

Department Health & Human Services

www.hhs.gov/oig

On the Lighter Side

Bev Bakes, CPC

I know you're all probably inundated with stories from Vegas. Well, here are a few Lighter moments from Vegas that you might not have heard about.

For instance did you know that I actually met Joey Buttafucio, who was seen sitting with his wife (yes his wife!) who was playing the slot machines. I walked by him and said "Hi Joe". Mary Jo then turned around, saw that I was way too old to pose a threat and so she resumed playing the slot machine. I walked away, but decided to go

See *LighterSide* on page 3

Now it is Easy to Check the Excluded List

Pat Waleski, CPC & Tony Fusco

Did you know that you can check the OIG's Excluded Physician's and Suppliers List online? "What is the OIG and the Excluded Program?" you ask?

The office of Inspector General (OIG) was established in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to identify and eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse. This mission is carried out through a nationwide program of audits, inspections and investigations. In addition, the OIG has been given the authority to exclude from participation in Medicare, Medicaid and other Federal healthcare programs individuals and entities who have engaged in fraud or abuse, and to impose civil monetary penalties for certain misconduct related to Federal health care programs.

Failure to comply with the provision of the OIG's Excluded Program can result in fines and/or loss of revenue for providers and practices.

The OIG identifies individuals and entities that are excluded from reimbursement under Medicare through sanctioned provider lists. In addition to the sanctioned information, the list also includes the specialty, notice date, sanction period, reason for sanction being imposed, and the sections of the Social Security Act used in arriving at the determination to impose a sanction. The OIG also lists the individuals, entities, and suppliers that have been reinstated to the Medicare program. This information is available on the Internet at www.hhs.gov/oig Checking the list should become part of your usual business practice before hiring a new physician or staff member.

Lighter Side con't

back and ask Joey for a picture. When asked to take his picture, Buttafuccho replied "Where you from?" I said "... uh, I'm from Connecticut and I'm here for a convention". He responded "No you're not, you hesitated!" Now I ask you, who is Joey Buttafuccho to determine my credibility?! The instamatic camera should have been a dead giveaway that I was not a reporter. Anyway I never got the picture of Joey. Nor did I see the likes of Julia Roberts or Matt Damon, who were reportedly making a movie at the Venetian Hotel. So much for spotting famous people in Vegas!

Upon returning from Vegas I was flattered to have received a phone call from none other than Jack Singer, who was the motivational speaker at the conference. He said he liked my comments on a questionnaire that we were asked to fill out. Just to clarify, my comment was that everyone could benefit from listening to Jack Singer speak. He has written a book as well as having been on television. Well, I made a couple of phone calls to see if it might be possible to have him come and speak to our local chapter. To make a long story short, it would not be cost effective, and regretfully so because I think that those of you who did not hear him would really have enjoyed his speech. Furthermore, my ego was cut down about a half size when I learned that Jack Singer has contacted Theresa Cicarella as well. Guess I'm not so special after all!!!

Modifier "50" Bilateral Procedures

Joyce Dupee, CPC & Susan Smith, CPC

One of the many challenges that we face as coders is to also have an understanding of how the various third-party payers interpret the CPT codes and modifiers. As most of us

know, some carriers do not recognize certain modifiers.

In our state, we have found certain carriers have specific guidelines with regard to the correct usage of the "50" modifier for surgical procedures. This modifier should be used to indicate that the procedure was performed on both sides. Proceed with caution, some CPT codes already indicate that a code is to be used if the procedure is performed unilaterally or bilaterally. For instance, procedure code 58720 is described in CPT as "Salpingo-oophorectomy, complete or partial, unilateral or bilateral"; therefore it would be incorrect coding to add the "50" modifier in this instance.

To illustrate the difference in requirements, we will use procedure code 38770 (pelvic lymphadenectomy) as an example. Most often, this procedure is done bilaterally. Healthnet (formerly known as PHS), requires that the bilateral procedure be billed as two line items:

Example:

38770 Number of Units: 1
38770-50 Number of Units: 1

Medicare recently informed providers of a change in their requirement. They ask that the code be billed on one line item with the modifier, however, they do not want the number of units changed, the number of units should be "1".

Example:

38770-50 Number of Units: 1

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Connecticut has just recently issued specific instructions to providers with regard to their requirements for billing bilateral surgical procedures. Anthem requires that the CPT

*See **Modifier 50** on page 4*

Modifier 50 *cont.*

code be billed on two separate line items with the “50” modifier attached to the code on the second line. The instructions are identical to Healthnet’s instructions.

Example:

38770 Number of Units: 1

38770-50 Number of Units: 1

In light of the difference in carrier requirements, it is essential to comply with specific carrier instructions in order to receive the appropriate level of reimbursement as well as to avoid claims denials.

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