

# Connecticut Coders Quarterly

Newsletter of the Connecticut Chapter of the AAPC

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## A Note from the President's Desk

Dear Chapter Members;

2005 is almost half gone (can you believe it?) and so is my tenure as Chapter President. There is still so much to do, but I'm enjoying every minute. We look forward to wonderful speakers that are lined up for our September and November meetings

The October conference committee is making great progress with plans for our annual conference. Mark your calendars for Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup> for the Holiday Inn in North Haven. We already have several speakers lined up and we believe this conference will be the best one yet!

Thank you all for being so diligent in "RSVPing" to Patty Vorio for our meetings and workshops. Just a note though – if you indicate that you will attend but then change your mind, please let Patty know. We base our food and printing orders on the number of attendees expected and we hate to use chapter funds to pay for more than is needed!

Wishing all of you a safe and wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you in September.

Sincerely,

*Corinne Fisher*

**Mark Your Calendars**  
**Friday, October 7, 2005**  
**Annual Conference**  
 "Keynote Speaker"  
**Kevin Lembo**  
 Connecticut's  
 Managed Care Ombudsman  
 Holiday Inn, North Haven CT  
 Watch your mail for more details!

### The Compliance Corner

## HIPAA: The Bigger Picture

By: Sharon A. Blanchette, CPA, MBA



Since the first of the year the number of HIPAA unauthorized disclosure incidents making the news has increased dramatically, and so has the resulting enforcement activity.

Since regulatory enforcement of HIPAA is complaint-driven, many covered entities have taken a lax approach in their Privacy and Security compliance programs. Some covered entities have only completed the highly-visible compliance steps that HIPAA requires, without really putting a documented compliance plan in place. These covered entities are leaving themselves open to both regulatory fines and possible jail time with respect to privacy/security violations.

While many covered entities understand that a complaint about an unauthorized disclosure will bring about a regulatory investigation, what many covered entities don't realize is that they could be the subject of a private civil lawsuit as well. Private lawsuits are believed to have "more teeth" compared to a regulatory action. It is because of private lawsuits that the lack of a HIPAA compliance plan could end up costing the

CT Chapter of the AAPC

Officers:

- President—Corinne Fisher, CPC
- President Elect—Kelly Anastasio, CPC, CPC-H
- Secretary—Patty Vorio, CPC
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Newsletter Staff:

- Editor—Carla Taymans, CPC

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practice a great deal of money and could leave a practice administrator in search of a good defense attorney.

### Example:

“XYZ Practice” has been in business for over 40 years and has employed a skilled and dedicated practice administrator for the past 20 years. The practice employs approximately 25 workforce members. The practice is affiliated with a large teaching hospital which addressed both HIPAA Privacy and Security properly.

Unfortunately, the practice’s response to HIPAA was lax and they never become compliant with the regulation. Then the unauthorized disclosure occurred at the hands the practice administrator and a regulatory investigation ensued. During the investigation, it became clear that the practice did as little as possible to safeguard ePHI. The practice hadn’t done a risk assessment or mitigated risks. The practice hadn’t implemented policies and procedures or trained their workforce members properly. The practice is currently working with an attorney to help them through the regulatory investigation.

The regulatory investigation is the least of the practice’s worries at this time. The patient, whose information was disclosed on an unauthorized basis, suffered both financially and emotionally from the disclosure. The violated patient obtained a private trial attorney and is suing the practice and the practice administrator under state privacy laws. Both the practice and the practice administrator have obtained their own defense attorneys.

Covered entities have to be concerned with regulatory fines and penalties, but it is cost of the private actions from patients who have had their privacy rights violated that the covered entities, *and the individuals employed by covered entities*, have to fear. It’s true that the practice saved approximately \$3,000 that it would have spent putting together an acceptable privacy and security compliance plan, but that figure is dwarfed by the 6-figures it’ll spend defending itself..

### The Bigger Picture:

Mistakes and accidents will occur. Hopefully, intentional and willful acts of unauthorized disclosure will not. However, in both cases, the best thing a covered entity can use as a defense in an investigation is a comprehensively developed and documented privacy and security compliance plan that shows the controls the covered entity put in place to prevent both unintentional and intentional disclosures of PHI from occurring on an unauthorized basis. Even covered entities that feel they did an adequate job with their HIPAA

compliance plans could be at risk.


Given the increased activity with HIPAA enforcement, covered entities of all types should review their HIPAA compliance plans and seek professional assistance if they are in doubt. An ounce of prevention is worth of pound of cure.

*Sharon A. Blanchette, CPA, MBA is the founder of Northeast HealthCare IT, LLC based in Windsor, CT. Northeast HealthCare IT, LLC provides healthcare technology consulting services to healthcare providers of all types. Sharon can be reached at (860)-298-0041 or [SBlanchette@nhcit.com](mailto:SBlanchette@nhcit.com)*

Tales of a New Coder  
**Win a basketful of**  
 By: Andrea Cable, CPC-A

**Summer Time Fun!**  
 Once upon a time ago  
**Take our Coding Challenge**

"Study hard for the exam"  
**“Summer is here and the coding**  
 That thought it was quite  
**is easy**  
 I can attest  
**See Page 4**  
 with a flying hu  
 But now a much more un  
 What am I now to  
 No one will hire  
 I can aspire  
 A coder straight out of class  
 But "Hey, I say"  
 I'm a CPC-A  
 And will work off my little "butt"!!



## **CEU Bulletin Board**

### **“And After Careful Dissection”**

#### **Coding from the Operative Report**

This 5-week workshop is a must for the surgical coder or anyone considering this intriguing area of professional coding

5 Sessions: Thursdays 6:00 - 9:00pm

**October 6, 13, 20, 27, and Nov 3, 2005 OR**

**November 10, 17, and December 1, 8, 15 2005**

AAPC members and coders will be awarded **15 CEUs** for attending and completing this educational program.

Contact Ellen McGuire CPC, CPC-H, CCS-P at

CodingConcepts1@aol.com or 203-239-4755

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### ***Professional Medical Coding Curriculum (PMCC)***

#### **Fall Courses Offered**

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#### **Coding Center of Connecticut**

CPC, CPC-H or H-Prep

Beginning September 10, 2005

Tuesday Evenings 5:30-8:00pm

Blackstone Memorial Library, Branford, CT.

Call 203) 865-CODE/2633 or email [kelly.anastasio@snet.net](mailto:kelly.anastasio@snet.net)

**Current CPC's can achieve 2/5 CEU's for each class they sit in on  
Contact Kelly prior to class to RSVP**

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#### **Coding Concepts LLC**

Beginning Tuesday, October 4, 2005

Tuesday evenings from 6 - 9 PM

At the ALL NEW Homewood Suites and Conference Center  
in Wallingford, CT.

Contact: Ellen D. McGuire CPC CPC-H CCS-P  
203-530-8921 [codingconcepts1@aol.com](mailto:codingconcepts1@aol.com)

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#### **DNB Medical Consulting, LLC**

September 2005—May 2006

5:30—7:30

**Tuesdays - Manchester**

**Wednesdays – New Haven**

Contact Daphne Neris

203-315-0379 [dnbmedical@snet.net](mailto:dnbmedical@snet.net)

## **Yankee Doodle Dandies attend National AAPC Conference**

by Corinne Fisher, CPC

Salt Lake City, Utah was the stunning setting for the 2005 National AAPC conference April 9 – 13, 2005. The conference was held in the sprawling Salt Palace convention center in downtown Salt Lake City. Since Salt Lake City is the corporate home of both the National AAPC and Ingenix, many regard it as the “coding capital of the world”.

Approximately 20 members of the Connecticut Chapter of the AAPC attended this year’s conference. On Sunday afternoon, we participated in the “Get to Know Your Local Chapter” event as chapters from all over the United States and the world gathered to showcase their chapter activities, ideas and cities. Each chapter brought give-aways ranging from flower seeds to Hawaiian leis to candy. Our Chapter’s theme was Yankee Doodle Dandy.

After opening remarks from National Chapter Officers, we attended break-out sessions of 1 ½ hours each on a variety of subjects that were pre-selected during the registration process. Sessions were categorized into subject matter such as compliance, billing, facilities, basic, intermediate, and advanced. Topics were offered on widely varied subjects such as career planning, Coding for the Well-Woman Exam, Worker’s Compensation, etc. With more than sixty sessions to choose from, this conference offered something for everyone.

The highlight of the conference was the Tuesday night banquet. Chapter members donned cowboy hats and danced to country music, rock, and even some hip-hop. Brenda Fisser, CPC, CPC-H was the winner of the drawing for a \$1,500 travel voucher. Only members who registered during the early registration period were eligible for the drawing. ... Brenda, your organization and efficiency really paid off on this one!

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## **Upcoming CPC & CPC-H Exams**

**Saturday, September 17, 2005**

**Saturday, November 12, 2005**

**8:30am-1:30pm**

**Yale School of Medicine**

**Beaumont Room**

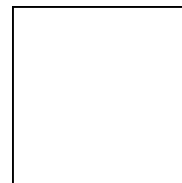
**333 Cedar Street**

**New Haven, CT 06520**

**You must register at least 6 weeks in advance with the National AAPC office ([www.aapc.com](http://www.aapc.com)) in order to take the exam. For more information, email [Corinne.fisher@yale.edu](mailto:Corinne.fisher@yale.edu)**

**Please visit the website of the  
Connecticut Chapter of the AAPC at  
[www.ctaapc.org](http://www.ctaapc.org)**

American Academy of Professional Coders  
Connecticut Chapter  
c/o Patty Vorio, CPC  
136 Village Street  
Northford, CT 06472



## SAVE THE DATE!

September 8, 2005

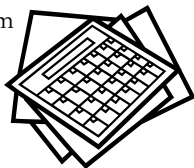
Leslie Scouff, MD

Professor of Diagnostic Radiology, YSM

"The basics of an Ultrasound Exam"

Brady Auditorium

8:00am



**Summer is here and the coding is easy.....** *complete our coding challenge for a chance to win a basketful of summer time fun compliments of **The Synchronicity Group!***

**Provide the appropriate CPT/DX codes as indicated for the following summertime scenarios:**

Daisy Chain, an established patient presents at your office complaining of itching all over her body. She reports to you that she had been gardening the day before and had pulled some major vines off her shed. Upon examination it is noted that the patient has a very serious case of poison ivy impacting 75% of her body. The patient is not exhibiting signs of shock or allergy at this point but the risk of morbidity or mortality in a case like this is high. Dr. Smith prescribes some cortisone and oatmeal baths and asks her to return in a few days or to call if anything gets worse. Assign the appropriate E/M code for this visit \_\_\_\_\_ and provide a DX code for Daisy's poison ivy \_\_\_\_\_.

After falling asleep on the beach during his vacation, David was taken to the emergency room with a second degree sunburn due to overexposure. Assign the appropriate DX code \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr. Jones has been sneezing, coughing, and experiencing itchy, watery eyes all spring and summer and comes to your office for the first time to receive a full work-up. The physician completes a comprehensive history and provides a detailed exam. His decision to run some allergy tests on Mr. Jones represents medical

decision making of low complexity. The nurse is asked to run eight intra-dermal tests with allergenic extracts. She reports that Mr. Jones tested positive to all eight tests. The results are explained to Mr. Jones who is asked to come back in one week and begin receiving his allergen immunotherapy. Code all of the services provided today: \_\_\_\_\_.

Suzy Doozy, a 30-year-old tennis player presents with pain at the left elbow that had developed after a prolonged game 2 weeks earlier. A diagnosis of lateral epicondylitis was made and a cortisone injection was recommended. After hearing the risks associated with this procedure Suzy indicated her desire to receive the injection. Under aseptic technique, a 22 G needle was introduced into the soft tissue and advanced to the tendon origin with care not to enter the tendon. Ethyl chloride was used for topical anesthesia, and 1% Lidocaine was injected, as well as 20mg of Depomedrol with immediate improvement in symptoms. Suzy was advised to rest and not play tennis for a least a week until symptoms had improved. How is this procedure reported? \_\_\_\_\_ Assign the DX code \_\_\_\_\_.

Upon returning home from a week at sleep away camp 10 year-old Bobby complained of severe pain and itching in his right ear. His mother brought him to see his pediatrician who noted that Bobby had a fever of 101 degrees and was exhibiting some drainage from the affected ear. He diagnosed Bobby as having a severe case of swimmer's ear. He cleaned the ear thoroughly and prescribed drops and children's acetaminophen for discomfort. He recommended that Bobby wear ear plugs when swimming. What DX code should be used? \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax this page complete with your answers to: 203-248-4329 (no cover needed) by August 1 to be entered to win. Please provide a phone number where you can be reached in case you win \_\_\_\_\_! Everyone who responds will be entered into the drawing. Look for answers and the winner in the next newsletter.**