Accurate Medical Coding Can Reduce Your Medical Costs

Claim overpayment due to fraud, waste, duplication or abuse is a $125 billion annual problem for employers. Medical coding is a much overlooked method of reducing medical costs. Medical coding is the process of assigning a numeric value to medical diagnoses, procedures and surgery, signs and symptoms of disease and conditions, adverse effects of drugs, complications of surgery and medical care. For example, 813.90 is a medical code for open fracture forearm whereas 813.80 is a code for closed fracture forearm. Therefore, if you are being billed for an 813.90 open fracture forearm when you should be billed for an 813.80 closed fracture forearm, you could be paying too much.

Medical coders serve an important function for accurately matching up diagnosis codes with the appropriate procedure. The coding guideline used is the International Classification of Disease, 9th edition, Clinical Modification or ICD-9 codes. It contains more than 18,000 medical codes. It is a standardized classification of disease, injuries, and causes of death, by etiology and anatomic localization and codified into a numerical representation. This allows clinicians, statisticians, health planners and others to speak a common language.

Medical coding certification that is required by most employers and recognized globally is offered through two separate organizations. These are the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) and the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). Make sure your Medical Coders have at least 3 consecutive years of experience and possess one of the following certifications:

- Certified Coding Specialist (CCS)
- Certified Coding Specialist-Physician based (CCS-P)
- Certified Professional Coder (CPC)
- Certified Professional Coder-Hospital (CPC-H)

In addition, persons with the following credentials in some circumstances can also be used:

- Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA)
- Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT)

In selecting a coding professional, make sure there’s no conflict of interest and in most cases, services should be performed on a contingency fee basis. The benefits of medical coding are:

- Reduction in fraud, waste, duplication of charges and abuse
- Blocking charges for unnecessary services
- Facilitating compliance with current government directives

In today’s cost-constrained healthcare climate, accurate medical coding is a win-win solution that will directly reduce your medical costs.
All About Backs

Self-Care for Backache and Stiff Neck

Your back is sore or you wake up with a stiff neck. Simple self-care techniques can help relieve these common problems.

Why It Aches
Back and neck aches can be caused by:
► a soft mattress.
► pillows.
► muscle strain.
► poor posture.
► the wrong kind of chair.
► accidents.
► muscle spasms or injuries.
► stretched ligaments.
► stress.
► kidney or disc problems.

Daily Self-Care
► Sleep on your side with knees bent or on your back with a pillow under your knees.
► Use a firm mattress and a pillow designed to support your neck and keep your head aligned.
► Learn relaxation techniques such as deep breathing to relieve the pain.
► If you work at a desk, use an adjustable chair with lower-back support or place a rolled-up towel behind your lower back.
► Keep your work surface at a comfortable height.
► Take short stretch breaks every half-hour.
► Lift objects by bending your knees—not your back.
► Wear low-heeled shoes.
► Don’t keep your wallet in your hip pocket—it can cause sciatica.
► Get some exercise every day.

Self-Care for Injuries
► Reduce swelling with ice: apply ice for 20 minutes, followed by a break of 20 minutes.
► After 24 hours of ice treatments, use either ice or damp heat (in a whirlpool bath or from a waterproof heating pad wrapped in a damp washcloth).
► Take short walks of five to 10 minutes, three or four times a day. Mild, gentle exercise increases flexibility and circulation and can relieve pain.
► Check with your doctor or physical therapist, who can recommend special exercises.

Learn What Works for You
Keep track of what causes your aches and what works best to relieve them. You’ll soon learn how to avoid routine back and neck pain.

Call Your Doctor If...
► you have extreme pain.
► you have numbness, tingling or weakness in a leg, foot or arm.
► your pain recurs or lasts longer than one week.
► you have a fever of 102°F or higher.
► You have frequent or unusual urination.
You’ll get us both fired...

One day an out of work mime was visiting the zoo, where he attempted to earn some money as a street performer. Unfortunately, as soon as he started to draw a crowd, a zookeeper grabbed him and dragged him into his office.

The zookeeper explained to the mime that the zoo’s most popular attraction, a gorilla named Sparky, had died suddenly and the keeper was worried that attendance at the zoo would fall off without him. The zookeeper offered the mime a job to dress up as Sparky until they could get a new gorilla. The mime accepted.

The next morning, the mime put on a gorilla suit and entered the cage before the crowd arrived. He discovered that it was a great job! He could sleep all he wanted, play and make fun of people and he was drawing bigger crowds than he ever did as a mime.

However, eventually the crowds tired of him, and he was getting bored just swinging on tires. He began to notice that the people were paying more attention to the lion in the cage next to his. Not wanting to lose the attention of his audience, he climbed to the top of his cage, crawled across a partition, and dangled from the top over the lion’s cage. Of course, this made the lion furious, but the crowd loved it. At the end of the day the zookeeper was thrilled, and even gave the mime a raise for being such a good attraction.

This went on for some time, the mime kept taunting the lion, the crowds grew larger, and his salary kept going up. Then one terrible day when he was dangling over the furious lion, he lost his grip and fell. The mime was terrified. The lion gathered itself and prepared to pounce. The mime was so scared that he began to run round and round the cage with the lion close behind. When no help came, and the crowd looked on in shock, the mime started screaming and yelling.

"Help, help me!" he screamed, but the lion was too quick and pounced. The mime found himself flat on his back looking up at the angry lion, who was just inches away from his face when he whispered, "Shut up you idiot! Do you want to get us both fired?"

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Humor Corner

The contents of this newsletter are intended to be treated merely as newsworthy articles that interest the general business community. Any information contained herein is not to be relied upon as legal or medical advice. If you should have legal or medical questions, we suggest you contact your attorney or physician.

ALPS Disability Management and Medical Cost Control services utilize a Total Partnership Approach to meeting and exceeding your expectations. We offer a diverse range of services including:

- Medical Record and Medical Bill Audit
- Coding, DRG & HCC Validation
- Evaluation & Management Audits
- Quality Reviews/Quality Assurance Assessment
- Pharmaceutical Bill Audit
- Retrospective Review
- Fraud & Abuse Review
- Validation of Performance Measures
- Medical Record Abstraction and Data Collection
- Surveys and Data Collection
- Disability and Case Management
- Staffing/Recruiting
- Provider Credentialing
- Subrogation/Third Party Recovery

ALPS has the following U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule Contracts under the following Special Item Numbers (SIN):

- 874-1, 874-1RC – Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services (MOBIS) – Consulting for Medical Quality & Cost Control – Contract No. GS-10F-0154W
- 595-21 – Workers’ Compensation Management Services – Contract No. GS-02-0150T
- 595-28 – Social Services (includes vocational rehabilitation, counseling, psychological-psychiatric services, and physical medicine) – Contract No. GS-02-0150T

ALPS (American Loss Prevention Services) was started in 1987. ALPS is a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business

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