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Don't Let Inaccurate Coding Shortchange Your Practice

Inaccurate, careless, or overly cautious coding costs medical practices potentially thousands of dollars a year in lost or delayed revenues. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to ensure your practice obtains the revenue it is entitled to receive.

Review How You Code

Most practice management software will allow you to generate coding productivity and utilization reports. What you find from this analysis should help you benchmark your coding practices against state and national norms and tighten your coding practices. Be aware that not every practice has exactly the same patient base, and these differences may account for variations in coding. That's why you shouldn't automatically assume that your practice is not accurately coding if your results show that you are coding at higher levels than the majority of other practices.

Keep Accurate Records

Making notes during each patient visit will help you bill more accurately. Taking the time to be clear will avoid headaches down the road.

Stay On Top of Changes

Attending coding refresher courses can help keep you and your staff current with coding practices and any changes that have occurred.

Perform Coding Reviews

Your practice should consider hiring an outside consultant every year or so to review your medical and billing records. The consultant may identify problems and help you put procedures in place that will prevent those problems from reoccurring. A coding review might include:

- A review of your practice's forms
- An examination of billing, data gathering, and other procedures
- A comparison of billing codes with the actual services that were provided
- A review of your practice's training in coding procedures

Accurate coding helps maximize practice revenues -- a goal well worth pursuing in any environment.

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