The rules and regulations surrounding coding, billing, and practice management are complex, variable, and updated on a regular basis. This all-star group of editors does an outstanding job of presenting the guidelines in an easy-to-understand, straightforward, and logical way, through which the reader can efficiently not only learn the basics and the advanced nuances of billing and coding, but also utilize the text as a reference for quick, to-the-point answers that arise on an ad hoc basis.

The chapter authors include practicing otolaryngologists who have participated at the highest levels of the Current Procedural Terminology and Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) administration, as well as consultants who specialize in answering the challenging questions posed by physicians and administrators on an everyday basis. The result is a 3-part text that is organized in its approach to these topics, starting with the Basics of Coding and Billing, and moving to Office-Based Otolaryngology, and finishing with Surgical Otolaryngology.

In the Basic section, the full breadth of coding topics are covered, including a review of the appeals process, legal issues, and audits, and an especially useful chapter on “Demystifying Modifiers.” Each subject includes an excellent overview of the source of the regulations, and then simplifies their meaning with uncomplicated examples to highlight the use of the material in everyday practice.

The next 2 sections of the text are organized around subspecialties of otolaryngology (eg, head and neck, allergy, and otology) as they relate to coding and billing in the office and in the operating room. These portions of the text are necessarily more heterogeneous, written by experts within each subspecialty. The structure of each chapter is well maintained by the editors, and includes a brief introduction, key points, key procedural codes, key modifiers, key International Classification of Disease (ICD)-9/10 codes, definition of codes, and controversial areas. Obvious discipline was used to keep the expertise adherent to this structural template, and the result is the ability to read the chapters in succession with a logical progression through the topics.

The strengths of the text include the combination of the expertise brought to bear on this challenging discipline, while maintaining a structure and template that reads well across the various disciplines. In addition, the text is extremely current, with focus on areas of high-frequency denials, controversies that providers are challenged with in the current payment structure, and discussion of current technology that is still working its way through the reimbursement system.

Weaknesses of the text include the incorporation of ICD-9 terms and a chapter on the transition to ICD-10. Written before the ICD transition (2015), a discussion of the transition was likely to be considered necessary, but its topic relevance was extremely short-lived. Incorporation of the ICD-9 terms within each chapter’s section on the “key codes” also represents wasted space. Last, the physical structure of the book is one that straddles between a soft-cover reference book with a spiral coil binding and a textbook with a flimsy paper spine and cover. Very similar to the handling of the source material, the publishers had to straddle the elements of being both a reference source and a textbook meant to enjoy over a beverage, but did not quite have the success that the editors achieved.

Regardless, the Essential Guide to Coding in Otolaryngology is exactly that: an essential read to all those involved in providing otolaryngic care, and those who assist with the reimbursement of that care.

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