

# Jo Ann Baker, CCS, CPC, CPC-H, CHCC

Coding analyst for CodeRyte

*Coding Edge (CE): Tell us a little bit about your career—how you got into coding, what you've done during your coding career, what you're doing now, etc.?*

**Jo Ann:** I became interested in a medical career while working as a unit receptionist on a hospital surgical floor. Prior to my receptionist position, I had taken courses in medical terminology and had read medical records. When a position opened in health information, I transferred over to the hospital's coding department.

Within the next few years, I graduated from college with an associate degree in arts and social science, and obtained multiple certifications in coding including AHIMA's CCS, AAPC's CPC®, CPC-H®, PMCC approved instructor program, and Certified Healthcare Compliance Consultant (CHCC).

During my career, I held positions as lead coder in an acute care hospital setting and education specialist for the veterans hospital medical administration department. I am also an adjunct instructor for Morris County College and a workshop presenter for AAPC. I have authored several articles for the *Coding Edge* and the *Advance for HIM* publications.

I work out of my home office in NJ, employed by CodeRyte located in Bethesda, Md. As a coding analyst, I provide client and technical support for our computer assisted coding (CAC) application. I also serve as a subject matter expert internally and to our clients.

*CE: What is your involvement level with your local AAPC chapter?*

**Jo Ann:** I am founder and past president of the Essex County, N.J. AAPC local chapter and I attend meetings and present seminars at the Morristown and Monmouth-Ocean AAPC Chapters. Also, I am a former member of AAPC's National Advisory Board.

*CE: What has been your biggest challenge as a coder?*

**Jo Ann:** My biggest challenge as a coder was transitioning from coder to educator, consultant, and coding specialist. I set my goals high, passed multiple certifications,

and obtained a college degree to prepare for advancement in my profession. In my current role, my challenge is to help fellow coders transition to "21st century coding" by overcoming their anxiety and making the most of technology (CAC).

*CE: What do you advise other coders to do if they disagree with the way a physician has coded his chart?*

**Jo Ann:** If a discrepancy is found with how a chart was coded or billed between the physician and a coder, ask the provider for a one on one meeting. Always be respectful of the physician and listen to their side. There may be a clinical explanation for why a particular code was selected that a coder may not be aware of. Be prepared in advance with examples of the doctor's notes, with cited official resources, and to offer suggestions to make the most of the time you have with them!

In addition, it is a good idea for the practice to schedule monthly interdepartmental meetings. This provides a forum for administrative and revenue cycle team members to discuss issues that require further investigation. Proactive research, auditing, and problem-solving before discrepancies occur ensures a healthy, profitable, and compliant practice.

*CE: If you could have any other job, what would it be?*

**Jo Ann:** I would love to be an author or a journalist! I enjoy writing and solving mysteries, and would like to write a novel, become a research journalist, or featured writer—after all, coding is about doing research and solving mysteries!

*CE: How do you spend your spare time? Tell us about your hobbies, family, etc.*

**Jo Ann:** I have been married for 24 years and live in northwest N.J.; we have a daughter in college, and a son who will be a senior in high school in the fall. I enjoy visiting New York City, watching my son play lacrosse, and spending time with my family. I have a talent for art and when time allows, I pencil and charcoal sketch. I am an avid reader of mysteries and novels. ■

