
doi:10.1016/j.tripleo.2011.01.047

The importance of using diagnostic codes - reply

In reply:

Thank you for reinforcing the importance of the need for a diagnostic coding system in dentistry and providing direction for this important task. Clearly, your interests in creating a validated mapping of the diagnostic codes and linking them to the dental procedure codes is worthy from both a practical and research point of view. Also, we should be pleased that the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research has invested in this effort, because this information will be critical for the development of the electronic health record, proper communication among entities involved with patient care, and data mining.

As mentioned in your letter, the task of creating a coding system has been attempted by others but has not gained traction owing to fragmentation and meaningful incentives. However, I would also encourage you to consider that even greater traction could be gained by involving dental professionals in the fields of Oral Diagnosis and Oral Medicine in the development, integration, and implementation phases. These experts can offer a diagnostic perspective that merits consideration. Also, although I cannot speak for the other dental specialities, I would surmise that each dental speciality would be willing to provide valuable input regarding dental terminology and diagnostic codes during these phases. At present, it is not clear how adoption of diagnostic coding might be viewed by the American Dental Association or the dental insurance industry; however, by involving dental speciality organizations and potentially emerging specialities I could expect a more beneficial outcome. Making the coding readily available and categorically simple also will aid in its success.

Craig S. Miller, DMD, MS
Editor, Oral Medicine Section

doi:10.1016/j.tripleo.2011.03.025