

Learn the ABCs and 123s of Billing and Coding

by **Melissa Garvey**
ACNM Writer and Editor

ACNM's new workshop series aims to enhance the financial savvy of its members. Workshop leader Joan Slager, CNM, CPC, shares her path to knowledge and what to expect from her classes.



Joan Slager

How does one nurse-midwife triple billed revenue in just one year?

Joan Slager, CNM, CPC, says she did it by getting informed about billing and coding. In addition

to leading workshops, consulting, and writing her quarterly *Coding Corner* (see page 31), Slager works at a hospital-based midwifery practice that earns \$4.2 million in billed revenue every year.

Survival of the Most-Informed

Despite her practice's financial success, Slager says profit is not her primary motivation. "I don't do this to make any money," she says, "but what I see is midwifery practices are threatened by finances. That's the chief thing that closes practices."

Too often, says Slager, nurse-midwives under bill simply because of misinformation. She insists that she never teaches someone how to manipulate the system; she regularly teaches nurse-midwives how to accurately capture entitled revenue for their services.

Slager first attended mandatory coding classes at her hospital-based practice in

Kalamazoo, MI when the billing and coding system became standardized by the federal government. She went on to attend formal courses and became a Certified Professional Coder through the American Academy of Professional Coders.

Slager first began teaching billing and coding at the Midwifery Business Institute at the University of Michigan, where she was soon recruited to share her growing body of specialized knowledge. Today Slager is a member by invitation of the ACOG subcommittee on billing and coding and is an actively sought speaker and consultant.

Workshops Especially for Members

Slager has now partnered with ACNM to bring her expertise to more nurse-midwives. "This is not a venture to make money," she emphasizes once again. "The focus is on serving the membership." The new Billing and Coding workshops launched in Albuquerque, NM in April and will be offered in four additional regional locations this year. The focus will be on information that is relevant to nurse-midwives and people that bill and code for midwifery services.

"Generic billing courses use cardiology, family medicine, and primary care examples," says Slager. "One of the chief comments I hear is I use clinical examples that are very common to midwifery, so [participants] feel like it's very applicable."

The workshops are designed for novice and advanced coders alike. "It's not completely basic, but not completely over the top," says Slager. The first-time student can keep up thanks to a user-friendly structure, but the information is also

Locations and Registration

Boston: May 23 at the ACNM Annual Meeting

Minneapolis: September 12

Orlando, FL: October 3

New York City: October 10

The maximum number of participants for each workshop is 60. Please visit www.midwife.org/Coding_Workshops.cfm for registration information.

advanced enough to qualify as seven hours of ACNM CEUs and seven CEUs through the American Academy of Professional Coders.

Slager encourages participants to come prepared with coding dilemmas from their home practices. The workshops have plenty of time built in for questions related to gynecology, obstetrics, inpatient care, outpatient care, and more.

Why Coding Makes Cents

Participants can also count on tangible financial returns for the time and money invested in attending the workshop.

As a consultant to midwifery practices, Slager often promises her clients that they will learn something within the first day that will pay for the entire cost of her visit. After her recent trip to a birth center in Pittsburg, the staff received Christmas bonuses and a check from an insurance company when they resubmitted for improperly billed services.

Slager hopes more practices will thrive following the launch of the new ACNM workshops. Likewise, ACNM expects its efforts to pay off well for members. **Q** mgarvey@acnm.org

Top 6 Reasons to Attend

1. Ensure legal compliance.
2. Document productivity.
3. Increase revenue.
4. Reduce denials, downgrades, and penalties.
5. Get your questions answered.
6. Learn from an expert nurse-midwife.