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BITING edge

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Who's Who



Michele Wallstrom

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Meet Michele Wallstrom! She's a provider network specialist in our Southern California region. She joined Ameritas in February 1996 after working as a deputy sheriff in Orange County.

Major job responsibilities involve auditing our managed care and prepaid provider offices to ensure that quality standards are met, handling credentialing paperwork for new prepaid providers, representing the company at area dental conventions and fielding calls from dental offices in her territory. Also responsible for recruiting and retaining providers, Wallstrom was instrumental in building our provider panel in the state of Washington.

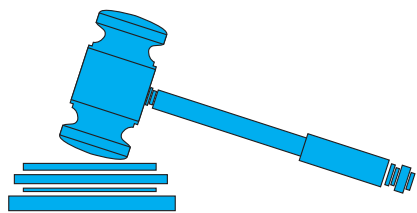
She currently holds the California Association of Dental Plans Auditor, OSHA's Compliance Specialist, Dental Assisting National Board and Infection Control Exam certificates.

Hobbies include cooking, walking/hiking, scuba diving, shopping and horseback riding whenever possible. She has an identical twin sister (who also worked for Ameritas), an older brother and parents who just celebrated their 38th year together. She says it's her family, friends and Goddaughter, Maddi, who keep her going!

New CDT Codes January 1st

New Current Dental Terminology codes established by the American Dental Association will

become effective on January 1, 2003. There are major changes to the codes that will significantly impact providers as they report services performed and affect insurance companies as they reimburse for those services. Due to the magnitude of these changes, we have already begun reviewing the impact upon our systems. While there are changes to each category of services (except orthodontia), the most significant changes relate to amalgams, composites, periodontal procedures and fixed partial denture retainers.



Our claims-paying centers will be ready for the new codes. This will ensure that we are providing insureds and providers with the excellent customer service they have come to expect and that we are compliant with the ADA as well as HIPAA. **During past code revisions, we accepted frequently submitted obsolete codes and processed them with valid codes. This time, however, we must phase out obsolete codes, including codes discontinued as of January 1, to assure compliance with HIPAA.**

If you use practice management system software, please contact your vendor about getting an update that incorporates the new codes. To order a copy of the new CDT-4 manual (available this Fall), call ADA catalog sales at 1-800-947-4746. If you have questions about the new codes or their definitions, please contact the ADA at 1-800-621-8099. PPO providers and prepaid specialists, corresponding CDT-4 codes will be listed with your 2003 fee schedules.

HIPAA:

For information on HIPAA regulations, such as the Privacy Rule effective this spring, visit the ADA web page, www.ada.org/prof/prac/issues/topics/hipaa/index.html, or send an email inquiry to HIPAA@ada.org.

Eclaims Info on the Web:

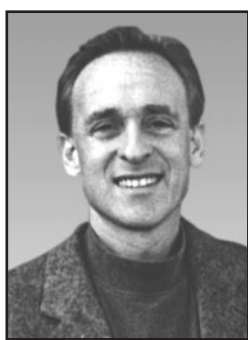
We've added information to our web site regarding the benefits of submitting electronic claims. Visit YourDentalSolutions.com (in New York, NY.YourDentalSolutions.com), select "Are you a dentist?", click on the heading for Electronic Claims.

Historical Fact:



George Washington's dentures actually were made of ivory. In 1789, his first full set of dentures were made by John Greenwood. The upper denture had ivory teeth and the lower plate housed eight human teeth fastened by gold pivots that screwed into a carved ivory base.

The Legendary Office: Charting



by Dr. Nathaniel Weiner, DDS

Performing dental tasks efficiently is essential to success. This is particularly true of the tiresome effort we make when charting our patients' progress. I often feel hurried, under pressure or just plain lazy when it comes to putting down the necessary notations of my day in the mouths. As time goes by, I find myself wanting to chart less and less. But as you know, there can be serious legal ramifications for not clearly writing down every procedure and medication.

Many doctors write down each word in its entirety. For me, that did not work. I developed a consistent, abbreviated system for use throughout the office — a chart legend. These handy abbreviations are now second nature to everyone in the office who maintains and views charts.

Here is an example of my abbreviated charting system:

#30 DO Ag 1c xylo 2% ep 1x10 ~

Here is the corresponding chart legend that cracks the code:

#30 = lower right first molar
DO = distal occlusal surface
Ag = amalgam filling
1c = one carpule
xylo 2% = xylocaine 2%
ep 1x10 = epinephrine 1:100,000
Dr. W's mark = Dr. Nathaniel Weiner

It's important to remember that your charts can be subpoenaed — at any time — to a court of law. Always be prepared. I recall a legal case where a dentist defended his entry of WNL as meaning *Within Normal Limits*. The plaintiff's attorney claimed WNL could have meant *We Never Looked*.

Unless a chart legend can be clearly interpreted and easily obtained, you are not being responsible to your patients nor to yourself. When choosing to use abbreviations or any form of shorthand, make sure the corresponding legend is consistent, clear and accessible. It works!

While maintaining two prosperous dental practices, Dr. Weiner also serves as the dental director for Ameritas Managed Dental Plan, Inc., in Southern California. He and his wife, Darlene, have three children.

If you are interested in contributing to *Biting Edge*, please e-mail Lori McPherson at lmcperson@ameritas.com.

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