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**Table 1. Principles That Guide the ACP Ethics Manual Recommendations**

Principle	Description
Beneficence	The duty to promote good and act in the best interest of the patient and the health of society
Nonmaleficence	The duty to do no harm to patients
Respect for patient autonomy	The duty to protect and foster a patient's free, uncoerced choices
Justice	The equitable distribution of the life-enhancing opportunities afforded by health care

Question: (from Gabrielle) I completed my medical and billing program about a year ago. I never ended up taking my test to be certified because I ended up getting a job with the doctors office I had done my internship with as a receptionist. I really want to pursue a career in billing and coding, but I am not sure how to set up my test to be certified or where to even start when it comes to studying for it. If someone could please email me back I would really appreciate it. Hi Gabrielle, Don't despair — many current coding and billing professionals have gone through your exact experience. I recommend utilizing the AAPC's website to locate a chapter in your area to contact and gain CPC exam site information and date. Click here to access the link to that area on their website. There are many areas of study that you must have a solid understanding of in order to successfully pass the CPC. It is important not to get overwhelmed once you open the test booklet — just remember to focus on coding conventions and guidelines and don't get sidetracked in the minutia. The following list is a mini breakdown of the areas of study you should ensure you have a thorough understanding of prior to sitting for the exam: Medical terminology: Prefixes/suffixes used for naming medical conditions/procedures HCPCS: Alphabetic designated codes that identify supplies/drugs/temporary codes Modifiers: Two-digit suffix appended to the end of a code to indicate additional services/providers/statuses ICD-10-CM: Diagnosis code reporting for physician and outpatient, coding conventions and guidelines for reporting of illnesses/conditions/accidents/injuries, and more E&M (Evaluation and Management Visit Codes): Know what visit codes are used in each outpatient or inpatient setting. Anesthesia Section: Understand the types of anesthesia — general/regional/local anesthesia/conscious sedation. Radiology Section: X-rays/diagnostic imaging/MRI/PET scan/ ultrasound/nuclear medicine Path & Lab Section: Testing and identification of disease/infections/etiology Medicine Section: Covers various procedures for all other medical specialties Body Systems: Integumentary System Musculoskeletal System Respiratory System Cardiovascular System Digestive System Urinary System Reproductive System Endocrine/Nervous System Eye/Ear System The AAPC also offers several courses on their website to assist you with exam preparations: Online Medical Terminology /Online Anatomy Course: Two-month courses that focus on understanding medical terminology and anatomy, a core requirement for medical coding certification CPC Preparation Course: Prepares students for a medical coding career in outpatient coding and may be taken online or in the classroom Official CPC Certification Study Guide: This study guide reviews each section of the CPC exam in detail and provides practical examples/sample questions/test taking techniques. CPC Online Practice Exam: The three 50-question online practice exams emulate the content and difficulty level of the actual exam and equal the actual 150-question CPC exam CPC Review Class: Review classes are offered by AAPC local chapters, with official AAPC instructors leading students through exam preparations. These are anywhere from three to eight hours in duration. For more information from the AAPC on CPC exam preparation, please click here. Additionally, many free resources are available that you can utilize for exam preparation as well. I have included a few links: Happy Coding! : Prepare for the CPC exam with these tips from two Certified Professional Coders who survived the test. We'll help you correctly answer the exam's tricky pathophysiology and ICD-9 coding questions. Back to Top In order to ensure that medical services of all kinds can be properly classified, the medical profession has developed a comprehensive codification system for the many diseases and conditions for which people seek treatment. This complex system, which has been evolving for well over a century, is currently known as the ICD-10. In an attempt to be as precise as possible, the ICD-10 contains codes for all common and uncommon diseases and medical conditions. While medical coders are not expected to memorize the approximately 68,000 codes found in the ICD-10, they are expected to understand the system and most importantly, how it applies to medical billing practices. In short, medical coders interpret physicians' notes and "translate" them into recognized medical and billing codes. Notably, these codes, rather than physicians' notes, ultimately determine what medical procedures will be reimbursed. While the ICD-10 plays a key role in medical coders' work, they are also expected to be familiar with two other manuals: CPT (Current Procedural Terminology) and HCPCS (Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System) Level II. Structure of the AAPC CPC Examination The AAPC CPC (American Academy of Professional Coders Certified Professional Coder) exam consists of 150 multiple-choice questions. Test takers have 5 hours and 40 minutes to complete the exam. Unlike many other certification exams, the CPC exam is an open book exam. In fact, test takers must bring copies of the ICD-10, CPT and HCPCS manuals to the exam. The exam consists of 17 different content areas and each content area consists of eight to ten questions. In what follows, we break down each content area. We begin, by providing some general tips on how to prepare for this unique and challenging certification exam. The AAPC CPC exam is a comprehensive exam that covers a wide range of medical coding topics. As a result, it is important to have a clear plan as you prepare for the exam. Among other things be certain to: Familiarize yourself with how to access information in all three manuals (the ICD-10, CPT and HCPCS). You're not being tested on your ability to memorize thousands of codes but rather on your ability to locate these codes in an accurate and expedient manner. Bring all three manuals to the test—if you don't, you're bound to fail! You are permitted to bookmark frequently used sections of the manuals, so do so as you prepare for the exam. You are also permitted to make marginal notes on your manual copies. Since you won't need a perfect score to pass, if a question is particularly long and complex, skip it and move on to the next question. Aim to answer at least 80% of the questions correctly, because you'll need 70% to pass the actual exam. Content Area 1: 10,000 Series CPT Expect ten questions on the subject of surgical procedures performed on the integumentary system. By definition, the integumentary system is an organ that protects the body from damage; skin, nails and hair are all part of this system. On the exam, you may also come across questions concerned with cysts. You should understand the system's function, parts and connection to disease. Content Area 2: 20,000 Series CPT Be prepared to respond to at least ten questions on the topic of surgical procedures performed on the musculoskeletal system, including those parts of the system located in the head, neck, back, spine, abdomen, shoulder, arm, hand, fingers, pelvis, hip, leg foot and toes. Content Area 3: 30,000 Series CPT There will also be a total of ten questions concerned with surgical procedures carried out on the following four systems: Respiratory system (e.g., nose, larynx and lungs) Cardiovascular system (e.g., heart, arteries and veins) Hemic and lymphatic systems (e.g., spleen and lymph nodes and channels) Mediastinum and diaphragm Content Area 4: 40,000 Series CPT Ten questions will focus on surgical procedures performed on the digestive system, which includes lips, mouth, palate, salivary glands, esophagus, stomach, intestines, appendix, rectum, anus, liver, biliary tract, pancreas, abdomen, peritoneum, and omentum. Content Area 5: 50,000 Series CPT Also, expect to encounter ten questions concerned with surgical procedures carried out on the following four systems and situations: Urinary system (e.g., kidneys, bladder and urethra) Male reproductive system (e.g., penis, testis, scrotum and spermatic cord) Female reproductive system (e.g., vulva, vagina and uterus) Maternity and delivery Endocrine system (e.g., thyroid gland, pancreas, and adrenal glands) Content Area 6: 60,000 Series CPT Be prepared to respond to ten questions pertaining to surgical procedures performed on the nervous system (e.g., brain, spine and extracranial and peripheral nerves). Content Area 7: Evaluation and Management The questions grouped under "evaluation and management" focus on the types of services provided in special departments and/or under special conditions. In this section, expect to find questions that test your knowledge of the following topics: Office/Other Outpatient Hospital Observation Hospital Inpatient Consultations Emergency Department Critical Care Nursing Facility Domiciliary and Rest Homes Home Services Prolonged Services Case Management Care Plan Oversight Preventive Medicine Non-Face-to-Face Services Special E/M Newborn Care Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care and Intensive Care Complex Chronic Care Coordination Transitional Care Management Content Area 8: Anesthesia Anesthesia, one of the most expensive parts of medicine, is a distinct content area on the AAPC CPC. Be prepared to respond to questions on reporting, qualifying circumstances, physical status modifiers, and anesthesia for surgical, diagnostic and obstetric services. Content Area 9: Radiology There will be ten questions on radiology, including specific questions on diagnostic radiology and ultrasounds, mammography, bone and joint studies, oncology and nuclear medicine broadly defined. Content Area 10: Laboratory Pathology Another key content area concerns laboratory pathology; on this section of the exam, be prepared to respond to questions on any of the following topics: Organ and Disease Panels Drug Testing Therapeutic Drug Assays Evocation Testing Consultations Urinalysis Molecular Pathology MAAA Chemistry Hematology and Coagulation Immunology Transfusions Microbiology Anatomic Pathology Cytopathology Cytogenetic Studies Surgical Pathology In vivo and Reproductive Content Area 11: Medicine The test will also present ten questions on topics in medicine pertaining to any of the following specific knowledge areas: Immunizations Psychiatry Biofeedback Dialysis Gastroenterology Ophthalmology Otorhinolaryngology Cardiovascular Noninvasive Vascular Studies Pulmonary Allergy and Immunology Endocrinology Neurology Genetics Central Nervous System Assessments Health and Behavior Assessments Hydration Therapeutic and Diagnostic Administration Chemotherapy Administration Photodynamic Therapy Dermatology Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Medical Nutrition Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment Chiropractic Manipulative Treatment Patient Education and Training Non-Face-to-Face Nonphysician Services Moderate Sedation Content Area 12: Medical Terminology Expect eight questions on medical terminology pertaining to systems of the human body (e.g., be prepared to respond to questions about parts and functions of the circulatory system and parts and functions of the skeletal system). Content Area 13: Anatomy Prepare for eight questions on anatomy in relation to all systems in the human body. Content Area 14: ICD-10-CM/Diagnosis Ten questions will focus on ICD-10's official guidelines for coding and reporting and on diagnosis questions; notably, diagnosis questions may also appear elsewhere on the exam. Content Area 15: HCPCS Level II Five questions will focus on modifiers (two-digit codes that modify another service or procedure), supplies, medications and professional services for Medicare patients. Content Area 16: Coding Guidelines Six questions will focus on the ICD-10's official guidelines for coding and reporting and on CPT coding guidelines and notes. Once again, this means you should know as much as possible about both of these manuals. Content Area 17: Compliance and Regulatory Determinations/Local Coverage Determinations) ABNs (Advance Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage) RVUs (Relative Value Units), which are part of Medicaid's reimbursement formula for physicians how to apply coding to payment policies How to identify and report fraud and abuse You should plan to study for the AAPC CPC exam for at least two months. The more you know without having to utilize the books during the exam, the better. You'll ensure that you finish all of the questions in the allotted time frame to achieve the highest possible score. Try out Pocket Prep's AAPC CPC exam prep app and study in conjunction with the AAPC textbooks! AAPC ICD-10-CM Code Book (2020) AMA CPT Professional (2020) AAPC HCPCS Level II Expert (2020)





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