

Announcing the New AAPC Specialty Coding Certification

Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (CSFAC™)

Harry Goldsmith, DPM

The American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC), with a worldwide membership of 116,000, was founded to provide coding education to physician-based coders. Its mission is to elevate the standards of medical coding through training, certification, ongoing education, and networking.

While AAPC is best known for its CPC® (Certified Professional Coder) credential, it has in recent years added over twenty medical specialty certifications for those coders who demonstrate coding expertise in specific medical discipline.

Over the past three years, AAPC has worked with the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) to co-brand what would be a new specialty coding certification, Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (or CSFAC™). The examination was developed by a team of leading podiatric and orthopedic coding professionals and was designed to test the examinee's:

- *Ability to read and abstract physician office records, procedure notes, and op reports for the purpose of applying correct ICD-9-CM, CPT®, HCPCS Level II codes, as well as correctly applying modifiers**
- *Knowledge of accurate evaluation and management (E/M) coding based on both 1995 and 1997 guidelines**
- *Understanding of Medicare rules and regulations including, but not limited to, incident to, consultations, E/M services with procedures, NCCI edits, and global surgery**
- *Ability to correctly code foot and ankle surgical procedures**
- *Awareness of medical terminology**
- *Knowledge of lower extremity anatomy and physiology**

AAPC specialty medical coding certifications, like CSFAC™, do not require the examinee first obtain his/her CPC® credential.

The American Academy of Professional Coders obligates its members to obtain 36 CEUs (continuing education units) every two years in order to maintain their credential (members with more than one certification would have additional CEU requirements). CEUs are readily available through local AAPC chapters, publications, seminars and conferences (e.g., the 2013 Codingline-NYSPMA Coding Seminar), workshops, webinars, etc. that have been approved by AAPC. Doctors may count a portion of their annually recognized CMEs toward their AAPC CEUs in order to maintain AAPC credentials.

The Value

Coders with sufficient experience and expertise in foot and ankle coding – whether for podiatrists or orthopedists – are encouraged to take the Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (CSFAC™) exam. Who are we talking about?

Podiatrists

Billing staff (including key billing service coders)

Foot & ankle practice office managers with coding backgrounds

Foot & ankle orthopedists; general orthopedists

Professional Coders and Coding Lecturers

What is the value? Passing the Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (CSFAC™) exam demonstrates a high level of expertise in the coding foot & ankle services, procedures, and conditions. For practitioners and their staff, the knowledge-base required for certification can only improve “best practice” specialty coding within their practices. Specialty coding becomes more sophisticated and accurate helping to ensure that everything that legitimately should be billed is correctly billed with less errors and denials. A certified specialty coder with a wide grasp of what is appropriate and what is validated can add significantly to practices when claim denials require appealing.

Preparation and Testing

There are quite a number of publications and study guides available to prepare the examinee for the Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (CSFAC™) exam. AAPC has study guides for coding and specialty coding. Medicare, online, has published policies, guidelines, and definitions common when billing Medicare. NCCI (National Correct Coding Initiative) has a guideline for use of the CCI edits. CPT® and ICD-9-CM both contain guidelines.

In addition to the above, the American Podiatric Medical Association will be working with several state associations to include a track at their major meetings for not only the Certified Surgical Foot & Ankle Coder (CSFAC™) exam, but also for an optional pre-examination advanced coding workshop.

When is the next scheduled CSFAC™ exam and pre-exam coding workshop?

Exam: August 21, 2012

Greenbrier Hotel, White Sulphur Springs, WV

AAPC CSFAC™ Examination

- 150 multiple choice questions (proctored)
- 5 hours and 40 minutes to finish the exam
- Open code book (manuals)
- \$245.00 (includes 1 free retake)

Seating may be limited

Pre-Exam Advanced Coding Workshop Date:

August 20, 2012

Greenbrier Hotel, White Sulphur Springs, WV

APMA Pre-Exam Advanced Coding Workshop (optional)

- 4.5 hours (the day before the CSFAC™ exam)
 - \$275.00
 - Includes time for questions and answers
-

Information including registration for the SAM AAPC CSFAC™ examination and the APMA Pre-Exam Advanced Coding Workshop can be obtained by emailing hgoldsmith@apma.org.