

e-Perspectives

on the Medical Transcription Profession

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Winter Scenes

I'm writing this in the middle of January in the new year. It's winter, and bad weather has impacted the lives of millions in the past month or so, with blizzards halting travel, closing airports, cancelling flights and other travel plans, stranding passengers and others for days in airports and bus stations, and disasters hitting other parts of the country with tornadoes, freezes, floods, and power outages. All this makes us long for a winter escape to a tropical or exotic location like Hawaii or Rio de Janeiro. Even those of us who haven't suffered from inclement weather know many family members, friends, and colleagues who have, and seeing and hearing about it on TV, radio, and the Internet make it seem very close to us, no matter where we live. And the millions without electrical power have suffered even more.

The closeness we feel to others because of our up-to-date communications technology is eroded in a heartbeat when we lose electrical power. We are so connected through technology that, when our power goes off, we seem even more isolated than we did before we got used to having connectivity. Even a few experiences recently without e-mail, instant messaging, and Internet connections made me feel *alone* in a way that has changed my thinking about myself and my place in the world. Of course, we can *choose* to disconnect ourselves when the world is too much with us, but having the choice taken away from us through loss of power or connectivity is especially frustrating. My conclusion—we are so spoiled!

This is the 53rd issue of *Perspectives* magazine, which has evolved over 17 years of publication to its present electronic format. As an e-zine, *e-Perspectives* is now available to a wider audience of healthcare professionals who value the substantive original articles we publish. *e-Perspectives* is now available worldwide to anyone with an Internet connection. The PDF articles may be downloaded and printed by those who want a print copy for reference or sharing.

In this issue of *e-Perspectives*, Ellen Drake provides the second article in her series on "Learning Punctuation Through Pattern Recognition." This one focuses on complex sentences and subordinate clauses and is followed by a quiz for continuing education credit. (Answers to the exercise accompanying the first article in this series on compound sentences in April 2004 are also included. Readers can find the first article as a Free Download on the HPI Web site.)

Rich Lederer provides two columns on grammar and punctuation in this issue. In one of his Looking at Language columns, he makes us think of dangling participles in a new way, and his column on punctuation marks will provide a workout for the most astute practicing grammarians.

John H. Dirckx, M.D., deals directly with the new challenge of avoiding the use of error-prone abbreviations in medical transcription. He relates the historical context in which JCAHO and ISMP (Institute for Safe Medication Practices) developed a list of problematic abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols. Applying the rules often falls to the experienced medical transcriptionist, although JCAHO insists that the burden of compliance rests with the dictator. In the real world, MTs would respond, "Yeah, sure. Tell it to the docs!"

Four pages of terms in the What's New in Medicine column round out this issue. Many of the new terms will appear in the 11th edition of *Vera Pyle's Current Medical Terminology* (2007). Watch for additional information on the release date of the new edition.



Sally C. Pitman

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