

Associated Billing Center's
Newsletter

Building Our Reputation One Client at a Time

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Reminder: Our New Mailing Address: Associated Billing Center, LLC-241 Forsgate Drive, Ste. 116, Jamesburg, NJ 08831

A Message From Mona

Covid-19, The Variants & Your Practice

A number of mental health practices are experiencing increased therapy appointments in reaction to the pandemic. Mental Health America reports that the number of patients seeking therapy for anxiety and depression has skyrocketed. People screening with moderate to severe symptoms continued to increase through 2020 and remains higher than rates prior to Covid-19. Prior to the pandemic, 19% of adults experienced mental illness. Over the last year, this number has risen by 1.5 million. Nearly 10% of youth in the U.S. suffer from severe major depression.

With increased patient rosters it is exceedingly important for practice owners to thoroughly understand the concept of RCM (Revenue Cycle Management). RCM refers to the process of identifying, collecting and managing the practice's revenue. It includes Eligibility & Benefits Verification, Expedient Claims Submission, Payment Ledger Sheets and Postings, Invoicing for Patient Balances and Efficient Denial Management.

I have studied the concepts of RCM as it relates to mental health practices. Each one of the above areas is a subset of an equation, that when properly executed, ensures optimum RCM for each practice. **Associated Billing Center, LLC** stays abreast of the latest research on RCM and its impact on the profitability of your practice. Our goal? A thorough and efficient RCM for each of our clients.

STAY SAFE. STAY HEALTHY.



Best Regards,
Mona

Education Box-You Need to Know



*** Telehealth Update ***

Medicare Reimbursement for Telehealth

On January 7, 2021 HHS Secretary Alex Azar renewed the current PHE (Public Health Emergency) allowing current Telehealth waivers to remain in effect through April 20th. Medicare will continue to reimburse via audio only through the end of the PHE. This date is subject to change.

Mental Health providers are reminded that once the PHE ends, Medicare will no longer reimburse providers for furnishing services via audio-only devices. After the end of the Public Health Emergency, only devices that have both audio and video transmission capabilities will be eligible for reimbursement under Telehealth.

Keeping You Informed

Most insurance providers cover at least some form of telehealth services. Many commercial insurers are following guidelines concerning the declaration of a Public Health Emergency in their state.

Utilize the following link to determine the latest on individual State of Emergency declarations. Please be advised that, in many states, there is a grace period following a State of Emergency end date.

[nga.org/state-covid-19-emergency-orders](https://www.nga.org/state-covid-19-emergency-orders)
Scroll to State Action Tracking
Status of State Covid-19 Emergency -orders

ADVISORY

President Biden has signed an executive order to reopen enrollment on healthcare.gov for those who need coverage from February 15, 2021 through May 15, 2021. Eleven states that run their own exchanges allowed their residents to obtain coverage outside the usual time frame. Most are expected to reopen their enrollment.

Inauguration Day & Mental Health



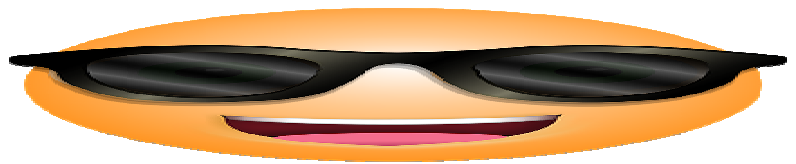
On Inauguration Day, President Biden announced the American Rescue Plan which includes significant investments that would help people with mental health conditions. The National Association on Mental Illness reports that part of the ARP specifically addresses the country's mental health needs during the pandemic. The plan calls for an additional \$4 billion to help individuals access mental health and substance abuse care.

Daniel Gillison Jr., CEO of NAMI, stated that "More people, including our nation's youth and first responders, are reporting their mental health is worse than it was a year ago. NAMI applauds the President's call for substantial resources to expand access to mental health and substance abuse services."

While economics is a concern for some individuals seeking therapy, it is not the sole obstacle. Over 115 million people in the United States live in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area. These are areas in which the ratio of mental health professionals to residents is smaller than 1 per 30,000 people.

Employment of substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors is projected to grow 25 percent from 2019 to 2029. Source: Gary R'nel

Laugh a Little or Maybe A Lot: It's Good Therapy



Eating an Oreo Cookie: A Direct Reflection of your Personality

1. You eat the whole thing. This means you consume life with abandon, you are fun to be with, exciting, carefree with some hint of recklessness.
2. One bite at a time. You are lucky to be one of the 5.4 billion other people who eat their Oreos this very same way. Just like them, you lack imagination, but that's okay, not to worry, you're normal.
3. Slow and methodical. You follow the rules. You're very tidy and orderly. You're very meticulous in every detail with everything you do to the point of being anal retentive and irritating to others.
4. Twisted apart, the inside and then the cookie. You have a highly curious nature. You take pleasure in breaking things apart to find out how they work, though not always able to put them back together, so you destroy all the evidence of your activities.
5. Twisted apart, the inside and then toss the cookie. You are good at business and take risks that pay off.
6. I just like to lick them, not eat them. Seek professional help - immediately.
8. I don't have a favorite way; I don't like Oreo cookies. You probably come from a rich family, and like to wear nice things, and go to up-scale restaurants.

Source: bouldertherapist.com



NASW Recommendations/Telemental Health Informed Consent

The National Association of Social Workers has written extensively concerning the topic of informed consent as it relates to Telemental Health. The NASW advises the following as a reminder: It is important to obtain informed consent for Telemental Health to address many issues, including but not limited to the risks associated with Telemental Health, exceptions to confidentiality, what to do if there are technical difficulties, interruption of service, and what to do in case of an emergency. Asking clients to review and sign a Telemental Health informed consent form is a requirement in many states and may be a condition of reimbursement (e.g., Medicaid) in some states. Even if it is not a requirement in your jurisdiction, NASW recommends obtaining Telemental Health informed consent from your clients as a best practice. Source: NASW

H I P P A Refresher for Mental Health Practices

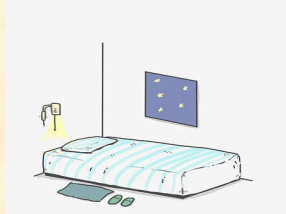
Does HIPAA allow a health care provider to communicate with a patient's family, friends, or other persons who are involved in the patient's care? The provider may ask the patient's permission to share relevant information with family members or others, may tell the patient he or she plans to discuss the information and give them an opportunity to agree or object, or may infer from the circumstances, using professional judgment, that the patient does not object. A common example of the latter would be situations in which a family member or friend is invited by the patient and present in the treatment room with the patient and the provider when a disclosure is made. Where a patient is not present or is incapacitated, a health care provider may share the patient's information with family, friends, or others involved in the patient's care or payment for care, as long as the health care provider determines, based on professional judgment, that doing so is in the best interests of the patient.

Source: hhs.gov

Stories You Simply Need to Know About



✓ How often have you heard people say that a married couple have not only grown old together but they are starting to look like each other? A study in the journal Scientific Reports debunks this observation. The study argues that people are attracted to mates who look similar to themselves. The study also points to the fact that people often look more similar to each other as a result of people seeking mates who look and act like themselves. The research conducted in part by a Stanford associate professor says that couples' faces become similar over the course of their marriage as a result of shared environment, emotions and activities, the Guardian reported.



✓ PepsiCo, the maker of Mountain Dew (loaded with caffeine), will soon market a beverage that is intended to help consumers relax and drift off to sleep. PepsiCo is about to start selling a beverage with L-theanine, which is an amino acid and FDA-approved supplement used for relaxation usually found in green teas. Named "Driftwell", the product was developed to ease angst and restlessness. PepsiCo says, "The need for relaxation has only increased during the pandemic". With consumption of soft drinks waning, beverage companies are exploring new product lines.




✓ Flight attendants in China are being asked to wear a diaper to help protect themselves from covid-19. The Civil Aviation Administration issued new guidelines to help protect flight crews from contracting covid-19 and pinning on a diaper is suggested. The guideline reads: "It is recommended that cabin crew members wear disposable diapers and avoid using the lavatories barring special circumstances to avoid infection risks." Visualize for a moment that the beverage cart is coming in your direction -well I will leave the rest to your imagination.


✓ Using profanity at certain times may just may be beneficial. New research says swearing can improve a workout and help reduce pain. Keele University in England has published research finding that people who cursed while squeezing a hand vice were able to squeeze harder and longer. People on bikes who swore while peddling against resistance had more power and strength than people who used neutral words, according to the study. Another study found people who cursed as they plunged their hands into icy water felt less pain and were able to keep their hands in the water longer than those who didn't swear.

Source: Gary R'nel

Refer us to a colleague. We appreciate it!

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