

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Reader Question: Save Yourself Construction Costs

Question: Are physical barriers available to prevent patients and visitors from viewing computer screens?

New York Subscriber

Answer: Many practices are concerned that they'll have to build new walls and close off front-desk windows, but there are some low-cost solutions to this problem. For example, here's what to do if your organization has several computer terminals in an area where a patient could walk through and view them.

Computer screens should be pointed away from the view of patients and others without clearance. In addition, try a basic screen saver that locks out after some period of no motion on the keyboard or the mouse. If a staff member walks away from his desk, the computer should shut down after 30 seconds of inactivity. The result: Whoever is walking by when you're away from your desk can't see anything he shouldn't.

Also, front desks at physician's offices and hospitals often have computer screens that are somewhat visible to patients. When that happens, ask yourself if the patient can view things on the monitor he shouldn't see. If a patient is sitting in the waiting room at an angle where he can see the computer screen, you can buy a special type of screen cover for your computer. It lies flat against the computer screen, and if someone looks at the screen straight on, he can see everything normally, but if he looks at it from an angle - if a patient is passing by or is seated off to the side - he wouldn't be able to view anything. And that's the type of simple, inexpensive device you can purchase at most office-supply stores.

- Answers to Reader Questions provided by **Jennifer Bever**, a consultant with Chicago-based Karen Zupko Associates.