

When I started my rheumatology practice in 1987 a typical note **hand**-written said:

*S: Some hand pain, swelling , and decreased grip strength*

*O: Lt 2,3 MCP's swelling and tender, poor grip*

*A: RA active*

*P: Solganol [gold salt] 50 mg IM*

*Obtain CBC,U/A, ESR*

*RV 1 month*

Billing was even simpler, the patient wrote you a check and you gave them a copy of a **hand**-written "superbill". This was a carbon copy receipt that read;

*Level 90024 Dx Rheumatoid Arthritis \$ xx*

The patient mailed that to their insurance company or Medicare to be reimbursed.

Have things changed! Case in point, having a private practice I have had to master MIPs coding each year with my practice advisor and the ACR RISE program.

Rather recently I attended an **FSR Town Hall** Zoom meeting and happened to listen to Jean Acevedo's talk on level 4 visit requirements. As the FSR's representative to Medicare's First Coast Contractor Advisory Committee (CAC) I always kept up with coding. Sadly though, with the complexity of modern practice, Jean's talk rang bells of items and requirements that I had completely forgot about. As a consequence I began in cooperating the necessary elements of the visit to substantiate the level of the service provided. To my surprise Medicare requested an audit of 40 of our practice's visits. Staff time, expense, and anxiety but luckily we were able to pass it.

A few lessons I learned from this. First, this mess and complexity are the result of typical physician apathy which has not changed since I entered medicine. We let politicians, bean counters, and insurance companies define what is best for us and our patients. So few of us take any responsible role in defending medicine. Second, The FSR works hard to provide you with educational resources such as our Town Hall programs and Advocacy in Tallahassee. We work with our State fellows exposing them to incentives to practice in Florida. Fellows attend our academic meeting, present posters, and most importantly get to meet you our members.

I hope you continue to support *our* society and you are always encouraged to get involved in the services provided.

Ken Stark, MD

