



PREFACE

Starting with the first edition of *The Productivity Manual for Medical Transcriptionists* and continuing with this Fourth Edition of *Microsoft Word for Healthcare Documentation*, productivity with accuracy has been the hallmark of this book series. As financial pressures and time constraints continue to bear down on the healthcare industry as a whole, the need to work efficiently and accurately is more important than ever before. Microsoft Word is a veritable toolbox with many features designed to help you work more efficiently, so the challenge is not teasing functionality out of meager software, but knowing how to use the built-in tools to your utmost advantage. This text is uniquely designed to teach medical transcriptionists, editors, and health information specialists how to meet the challenges of the high-volume, time-constrained work of transforming dictation into an accurate and meaningful document.

After ten years of incremental changes, Word underwent a considerable facelift with the release of Office 2007. For new users, Microsoft is certain the revamped interface creates a friendlier environment for working with a very complicated, feature-rich application. For veteran users, however, the new interface is initially startling and very disorienting. “Where did that command go?” is a common refrain heard from long-time Word users. But veteran users will eventually realize that it is still very much the same Word underneath a new façade. Whereas previous editions of this text focused on facilitating the switch from DOS-based software to a Windows-based interface, this edition highlights the similarities between Word 2003 and Word 2007.

At first blush, one might wonder how a single text could cover two seemingly different versions of Word. One might also wonder why it is important to focus on what is the same, rather than focus on what is new to Word 2007—after all, Microsoft put a lot of effort into developing an easier-to-use interface. Even with all the cosmetic changes, Word 2007 has retained most of the “legacy” methods for completing tasks. Instead of describing every possible approach to completing a given task (of which there is always a minimum of three), this text emphasizes the methods that are most consistent between Word 2003 and Word 2007. Focusing on what is the same between these two versions of Word will help medical transcriptionists (MTs) be productive in a variety of educational and employment settings. It’s not unreasonable to imagine a student or a practitioner (especially independent contractors) needing to quickly switch between the two versions of Word or even using both versions at the same time. Since speed and accuracy are gained by developing habits and muscle memory, maintaining consistent methods of working will maintain a consistent level of productivity regardless of the software version.



As with previous editions, this text focuses heavily on shortcut keys and keyboard commands as opposed to the mouse. Even with the extensive changes in Word 2007's user interface, the shortcut keys have remained largely the same, and key sequences for accessing commands on Word 2003's menus have been retained wherever possible. Learning shortcut keys works to the MT's advantage, since the goal is to keep the fingers on the keyboard while the foot is on the pedal. Transcriptionists using Word 2003 will be best served by memorizing as many shortcut keys as possible, so when the inevitable switch to Word 2007 occurs, the transition will be faster and easier.

The cosmetic changes in Word 2007 are symbolic of the changes happening throughout the healthcare industry—the underlying principles of healthcare documentation are still at work but there are tremendous external changes. The previous decade saw medical transcription move from analog tapes and paper-based documents to digital sound files and electronic delivery. The next era in transcription will be marked by the widespread adoption of speech recognition and the use of “smart” documents containing XML and other types of encoding. This edition supports both current and emerging healthcare documentation technologies. MTs moving into the role of Speech Recognition Editor (SRE) will need to hone their keyboard editing skills more than ever, as many platforms utilize keyboard commands to simultaneously control the audio playback and edit the speech-recognized drafts.

More and more, MTs are working with Word in conjunction with transcription platforms that control certain aspects of document management and patient demographics. Although this text does not describe any particular platform, it contributes to an understanding of these technologies by explaining the use of fields, document properties, template files, global templates, and other add-ins. This background information is also useful to health information professionals that process and edit documents before printing or exporting to an electronic record system. For these individuals, knowledge of fields and formatting will make editing easier and will avoid unintentional errors in the final report.

No doubt, technology will continue to have a tremendous impact on healthcare documentation, and the era of the “traditional transcriptionist” may give way to the “documentation specialist” whose role may include a mixture of transcribing, editing, and value-added tasks such as encoding and verifying data analyzed by natural language processing. The possibilities are exciting for individuals who enjoy learning and taking on new challenges. The traditional transcriptionist has always been characterized as a constant learner, and that same zest for learning a new medical term can and should be applied to learning technology. To secure a meaningful and profitable role in the future of health information, make a commitment to incorporate a new shortcut key, a new technique, or a new concept into your routine every few days. Incremental learning, as opposed to gorging and cramming, is more successful, more rewarding, and certainly less stressful.

While many perceive transcription as a manual job, MTs who hear “doctors' voices in their heads” on a daily basis know it is truly knowledge work. Critical

listening and the ability to transform spoken English into comprehensible, written form are unique and valuable skills that still cannot be duplicated by computers. As technology inches its way into our lives and strives to replace us, it paradoxically proves the MT's true value. An underlying goal of this text is to demonstrate how the fusion of technology and the art of language are culminated in the extraordinary talents of the professional, knowledgeable, and dedicated healthcare documentation specialist.

Best wishes for a profitable and rewarding career,

Laura Bryan

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