

# TurboCoder™

## Case Study: Contract Coding

Case Study



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**Organization:** Resolutions (Int)  
www.resolutionsint.com/  
The Coding Company  
www.thecodingcompany.com.au/  
Matthews Health Coding Solutions (MHCS)  
www.mhcs.com.au/  
**Industry:** Health Information - Medical



## Clinical Coders get the code right with TurboCoder

Clinical coding is the task of applying standard codes to clinical statements. The codes make it possible to easily document the type and frequency of procedures being undertaken in public and private hospitals, medical clinics, day surgeries and other health facilities. A patient's coding data is integral to billing and an essential prerequisite for any facility seeking to submit a health insurance claim. In Australia, where activity-based funding was introduced on July 1, 2012, coding data will now form the basis upon which any health facility receives public funding.

As Louise Matthews, President of the Clinical Coders' Society of Australia Inc. and Principal of Matthews Health Coding Solutions Pty Ltd notes, "Coding substantially contributes to income for hospitals. A hospital can potentially lose money if a record is not coded correctly."

Coding is a task that requires speed, accuracy and efficiency. Each disease or procedure has to be matched to the right code. This requires a reliable reference work listing disease and procedure codes, plus the relevant standards.

### Key challenges: Book weight and costs

The basic reference in Australia is the five-volume set of books detailing the ICD-10-AM, an authorized local modification of the World Health Organization's diseases classification system. The volumes also include the Australian Classification of Health Interventions (ACHI) which is used to report procedure codes and the Australian Coding Standards.

The books however, are undeniably awkward. The five volumes weigh in at a hefty five and half kilograms, making them a less than ideal choice for the many contract coders and auditors that travel around the country, providing coding and auditing services to facilities on a periodic or ad hoc basis.

Debbie Abbott, Director and owner of contract coding and auditing company, Resolutions (Int) Pty Limited, points out, "We used to lug the books around to client sites. We'd have our luggage to deal with on top of the books. It has at times added to the cost of our travel. In addition, we had to purchase sets of the books for each staff member at a cost of around \$500 per set of books."

The other defining difficulty of the books is the problem of dealing with errata. Whenever errata are issued, the changes need to be noted in the volumes. Abbott adds, "This is the biggest issue we have to deal with in using a paper edition of the books. Previously, we have had to hand write the errata changes in the book. It's a costly process in staff time and many of the errata involve changes to codes that are rarely used."

### A digital alternative: TurboCoder

An alternative reference, favored by many in-house and contract coders, is the *TurboCoder*. Developed more than a decade ago and initially marketed under the name "eBook", the *TurboCoder* is the foremost ICD-10-AM/ACHI/ACS digital reference tool for clinical coding in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. Essentially a searchable, easily navigated digital book that is automatically updated whenever new content or errata is available, *TurboCoder*



includes fully hyperlinked disease and procedure codes, and coding standards. It uses the award winning eComPress® technology developed by Eurofield Information Solutions (EIS) - the same technology that underpins the internationally recognized ICD-10 reference work published by EIS on behalf of the World Health Organization.

### Digital advantage 1: Portability

For Abbott, whose company has been using *TurboCoder* for clients right across Australia since the product's inception, software portability is extremely important. "If we have to travel, we still have the *TurboCoder* on our laptops. We don't have to carry the books around. Whether we're involved in coding, education or auditing, it doesn't matter where we are. We always know that the information is up to date and we can answer any question that comes our way," she notes.

Over the past ten years, Abbott says, her staff have never experienced any technical problems with the software-based work. "It's very easy to use and it's being enhanced all the time. I love the fact that it links up with coding matters and all other decisions. It's really good for auditing. It's reasonably priced, especially when we have to purchase around 10 to fifteen copies. We've never moved away from *TurboCoder* because it's simple and we really like the product."

### Digital advantage 2: Automatic updates

At Sydney-based health information management, medical records storage, retrieval and management business, The Coding Company, the intuitive nature of *TurboCoder* has led to it being used to help train new coding staff.

The company also uses *TurboCoder* extensively in its contract coding and auditing work.

Jenny Gilder, the Coding Company's Director of Health Information Management Professional Services says, "When we prepare audit reports for hospitals that are going through accreditation we need to compare and review coded data, and make sure that there are performance improvements. We usually use the reference tools that the client has, but we also always take the laptop with *TurboCoder*." That way, she explains, even if no computer is available at the facility, or if the hospital network goes down, the contractors remain productive. "The most important thing as a contractor is to keep coding," she adds.

Gilder agrees with both Abbott and Matthews that errata can be a big problem with the printed volumes. "If there is a huge errata, nobody writes it up and when this happens, accuracy and coding are compromised."

*TurboCoder* avoids this issue because the software automatically downloads and incorporates any changes directly into the text. "When we go through major changes such as occurred this year with diabetes, the downloads are ideal. There is no other alternative to this. *TurboCoder* is the only reference that provides it," Gilder asserts.

### Digital advantage 3: Productivity improvements

Another long-term user of *TurboCoder* is Matthews Health Coding Solutions Pty Ltd. This ten-person contract coding business initially began using *TurboCoder* more than a decade ago because it offered an inexpensive, portable solution.

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However, founder Louise Matthews soon found the solution contained many other attractions. "I started using *TurboCoder* in day hospitals primarily because generally, we find ourselves having to share an office. Frequently we'll go in on the day the office manager or practice manager isn't there. From a space point of view, we don't have room to set up five books on the desk."

Since then Matthews has shifted all of her clients and staff onto *TurboCoder*. The clients appreciate the reduction in cost for the reference work and her work has become much faster. "I do look at books occasionally but our primary focus is to get the coding done as efficiently as we possibly can so that client costs are kept down. I find *TurboCoder* is around 90 per cent quicker than using an index," Matthews explains.

The company's attention to coding accuracy, efficiency and cost effectiveness appears to be paying off. In late 2011, Matthews Health Coding Solutions Pty Ltd branched out with a new offering of a remote coding service for regional and day hospitals. Matthews' staff simply log on to the client's servers

remotely and access the scanned clinical records. Coding is then carried out using *TurboCoder* which is installed on computers in the Matthews' office. "The cost saving from the hospital perspective is massive. They don't have to pay travel or ancillary costs for coders," she notes.

## Digital advantage 4: Education opportunities

While *TurboCoder* has established itself as the reference manual of choice for many professional coders across Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, some are hopeful that in the future, it will also become part of curriculum for coding students. This opportunity is also supported by the move by educational organizations towards digital courseware, and the challenges of interfacing these educational tools with books.

"In this day and age, the courses should be written to suit the *TurboCoder* because the students themselves all have laptops and their assignments have to be typed. Why do we insist they refer to the books? *TurboCoder* has the standards and everything that we need," Gilder concludes.

## About eComPress

Eurofield Information Solutions (EIS) is an Australian technology company and the developer of a market leading electronic publishing and distribution solution, eComPress. Designed for organizations with a need to produce, distribute and maintain large reference publications, eComPress is a highly secure electronic publishing technology that provides efficient compression, very fast highly relevant searching and powerful annotation capabilities, with an intuitive easy-to-use interface. Microsoft Windows-based, eComPress produces electronic publications as diverse as operational and service manuals, dictionaries, standards, procedure manuals, handbooks, statutes, legislation, medical journals and directories.

Leading organizations globally and in Australia have discovered the powerful eComPress technology. Customers include the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Australian Federal Department of Health and Ageing, and most recently the Australian Army.

The company's innovative solutions have received numerous awards, including the Australian Technology Showcase Award and a Consensus Software Award. EIS is also a Certified Microsoft Sales Partner. For more information about the company, please visit [www.turbocoder.com.au](http://www.turbocoder.com.au).

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