Imagine this…

An ambulance rushes a mother and her fifteen year old son to the nearest Emergency Room at an area Key West hospital. The boy is the victim of a shark attack. He has been severely bitten on the leg, while surfing with friends at the beach. Upon arrival at the ER, the boy is whisked in to surgery and receives thirty-five stitches in his leg. He is also given antibiotic shots, and prescribed medication. Once stabilized, he is released to his mother. The mother and her son proceed to the Discharge Desk, where she gives the ER staff member her family’s medical insurance card. One week later, the mother receives notice from her insurance company, telling her they are denying the claim for her son’s surgery. She is told she is responsible for the $9,000 medical bill payment. What went wrong? As shocking as this is, medical insurance companies quite commonly will deny payment for a patient’s treatment and care. How can this possibly happen? More times than not, claims are denied due to incorrect medical billing codes on the CMS-forms used at healthcare facilities. Careless or uneducated mistakes affect patient care. This is not acceptable.

As a future Medical Coder/Biller contemplating what I believe to be best practice in my discipline, as well as how I envision myself integrating in with the healthcare profession, this is what I hold to be true:

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability, this oath:

I will remember that patients are more than a code book of illnesses and treatment codes. I will avoid unfamiliar or confusing medical insurance terminology so patients will not be confused.
Patients should be valued and treated with respect and compassion. I will have a positive, courteous manner with all patients I encounter so they will feel better understood. I will carefully listen to their concerns, so I may assist them in the most helpful way.

I will strive for accuracy and efficiency in all the medical coding work that I do, so as to benefit the patient and my healthcare employer. I will strive to make sure all codes I enter are verified and double-checked so as to avoid costly errors.

I will respect the privacy of the patient, according to HIPAA guidelines. A person’s health is sacred. When working with patients, I will make sure to avoid letting their personal health information be overheard by others, and will ensure all confidential health records are never left unattended within a folder or on a computer screen.

I will develop intuitive communication skills, so that I may communicate calmly and patiently with patients, who may be frustrated or frightened. I will, to the best of my ability, be a compassionate, educated listener, so I may better understand and help with all patient concerns.
I will be a lifelong learner and problem solver, prepared for the ongoing changes that continue in the healthcare industry. I will attend ongoing continuing education workshops and seminars, so I will be knowledgeable and current on health insurance industry.

This Medical Coder Oath is made by me as a pledge to be better than the typical. It is a promise to incorporate the values, qualities, behaviors, beliefs and standards, I believe, when followed will (in my own small way); make a difference to those patients and other professionals with whom I work. In closing, I choose this quote to summarize my overall Manifesto philosophy:

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.

And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”

-Edward Everett Hale