

Reviews of Books and Software

Book Reviews

Working with Insurance and Managed Care Plans—A Guide for Getting Paid. Jan Davison and Maxine Lewis. McGraw-Hill, Inc, New York, 1995, 448 pp, \$39.95. ISBN 0-07-600744-8.

This book is essentially a programmed text designed to educate readers in a straightforward manner about the nuances of billing for physician services. The book begins with an excellent introduction to the claims process and a review of all the steps physicians need to consider to ensure that they are billing appropriately for the care they have provided. The text does an excellent job of discussing coding with overviews of ICD-9CM, HCPCS, and CPT. Physicians will find the information about the entire billing process, from documentation to coding, very helpful in ensuring appropriate reimbursement. There are chapters explaining Medicare and Medicaid, along with CHAMPUS and Workers' Compensation programs. The overview on private indemnity insurance uses Blue Shield billings as an example.

To address the change to a managed healthcare environment, the text includes an introduction to managed care plans and provides good definitions of the various acronyms that are used to describe different types of managed care organizations. This section also provides information for a practice to consider while contracting for managed care patients and outlines the necessary steps to be taken that should be considered before entering capitated reimbursement programs. While helpful, this area is weak because the authors do not stress the need for understanding appropriate practice costs, especially as broken down by age and disease groups. An expanded discussion about capitation would have greatly enhanced the usefulness of this text. The book concludes with a chapter on quality improvement as a means of continually examining the billing system. Billing is an important practice function, but quality initiatives in billing are probably often overlooked. The information sources and glossary at the end of this text are complete and helpful, with the exception of recommendations for computer software packages. Physicians desiring advice on

computerized billing programs will need to look elsewhere.

What makes this book unique is that it is a self-instructional text, complete with short quizzes at the end of each chapter to ensure that the reader understands the key points. Additionally, it is full of examples of letters, forms, and worksheets that a practice could use as templates for designing a billing system.

The text is easy to read. It presents complex subjects in a straightforward, understandable manner. The book is probably most useful to physicians and office managers who are trying to improve the skills of their billing staff. This text could also be used by family practice residencies as part of their practice management curriculum. This guide to getting paid is an excellent resource for any physicians who are responsible for the billings related to their clinical practice.

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Software Reviews

INTERACTIVE ATLAS OF HUMAN ANATOMY, Version 1.0 (1995). Ciba Medical Education, PO Box 18060, Newark, NJ 07191. 800-631-1181, ext 895; \$99.95 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

DOCUMENTATION: Shipped in 17.5 × 24.5 × 2 cm CD jacket that contains 24-page, illustrated color booklet detailing the use of the software. Separate small pamphlet describes installation.

HOW SUPPLIED: CD-ROM.

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS (Minimum): PC: Windows 3.1, 4MB hard disk space, 4MB RAM (6 strongly recommended); Macintosh: System 6.0.8, 4MB RAM; both: 13" color VGA monitor with 640 × 480 resolution and 256 colors; CD drive.

POINTING DEVICE: Necessary.

TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SUPPORT: Yes. 1-800-631-1181, ext 895.

DEMONSTRATION DISKS: None specified.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE: 30-day return policy.

RATING: Good.

Few physicians need an introduction to Frank Netter, MD, the late illustrator par excellence for Ciba. Dr Netter's *Atlas of Human Anatomy* is now available as a 20-g piece of plastic, a CD-ROM entitled *Interactive Atlas of Human Anatomy (Atlas)*. Why an anatomic atlas on CD? Illustrations can be shuffled into any order and reused multiple times in the process. Anatomic labels can be excluded from an illustration with one click and resurrected with a second. Students can have the computer quiz them on anatomic structures. Quizzes and study guides can truly be created in seconds with a few mouse clicks. And this version of *Atlas* occupies a mere 97MB of the CD's 640MB capacity, leaving plenty of room for improvement.

Atlas can be installed easily using a Windows' File-Run "d:setup" command. Invoking *Atlas*, the user is presented with the main screen, a Help screen. This screen contains all the program features and search buttons down the left side of the screen with a one-sentence explanation of each feature immediately to the right (Figure 1). Users may choose to view plates sequentially, as if leafing through a book; to search by region, by system, or by keyword; or to return to a previous user-created list of plates. On my 60-mHz Pentium system with quad-speed CD, *Atlas* was snappy.

The main display window for anatomic drawings is not resizable, is not moveable (fixed in the left upper corner of the screen), and occupies only 480 × 640 pixels on my 600 × 800 pixel screen. Only one drawing can be viewed at a time. There is no familiar Windows' Menu Bar across the top, and there is no Edit feature for selecting and copying material to other programs. *Atlas* has an excellent Help function invoked by holding the control key and clicking the icon of interest. A red sentence on the main Help screen tells users just that (Figure 1). The interface is logical, with many hints about appropriate sequences if the "wrong" button is clicked.

When a user chooses to search by region, anterior and posterior anatomical views are presented, with anterior regions divided into "head and neck," "upper limb," "thorax," "abdomen," "pelvis and perinium [sic]," and "lower limb." The posterior view substitutes a "back

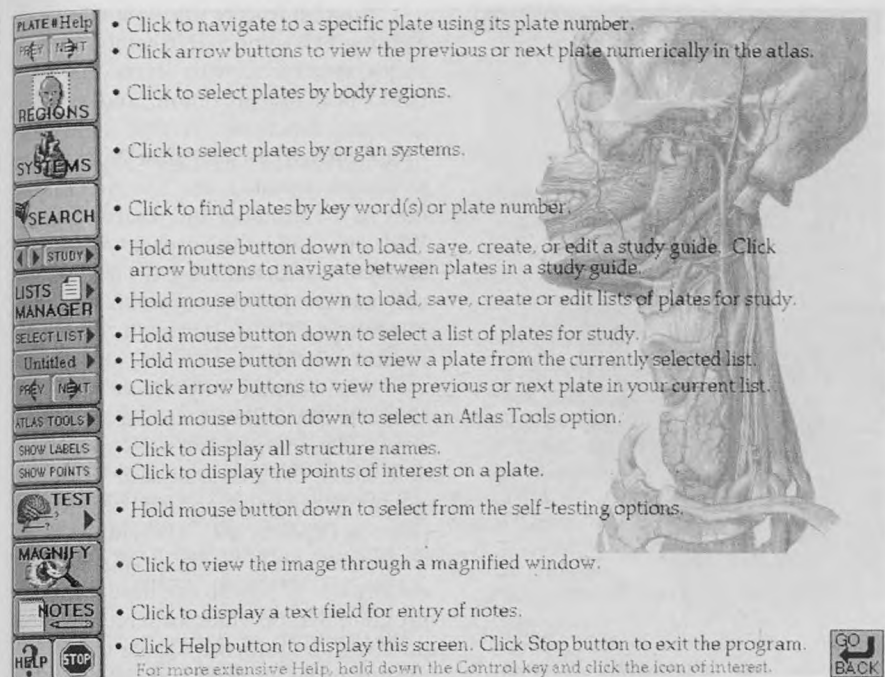


Figure 1. The main *Atlas* screen. Users are presented with this screen on entry into the program and when the Help? button (*bottom left*) is clicked. There is no Windows' Menu Bar or any intrinsic Edit function.

and spinal" section for the "thorax" and "abdomen" sections. Clicking on any region brings up a list of subregions; for example, "head and neck" has 12 subregions: "neck," "ear," and "pharynx," and so forth. Selecting the "ear" sub-region produces a list of 18 associated plates. Users may save these lists for easy future retrieval or browse through all the plates, selected plates, or both (Figure 2, *bottom*). Searching by system, eg, "skeletal," "muscular," "circulatory," "nervous," "respiratory," or "endocrine," works identically: the endocrine system is divided into six "divisions," with 16 plates associated with "pancreas." The search function operates by radio-button selections that determine where the term can be searched for, eg, anywhere on the plate or just in the plate's title. Users may select the search term from a list box or type it in. Once a plate is displayed, its labels can be toggled on and off with the successive clicks of the "Show labels" button. Selecting "Test" and then "Begin Practice Test" invokes a series of questions asking the user to click on the point corresponding to the anatomic label in the plate (Figure 3).

Atlas allows Notes files for personal notes (Figure 2, *right side*). While a Notes file is active, clicking on any anatomic label causes the plate number and text of

the label to appear in the Notes file (eg, "Plate #396B Origin of biceps . . ."). (The Notes window seemed to obey Windows conventions, eg, moveable, partially resizable.) Once a Notes file is opened, the only way to start a new one is to exit from *Atlas* and begin anew. Another thoughtful feature is a built-in magnifier, indicating that someone on the design team has presbyopia or a small monitor.

Atlas provides the ability to reshuffle plates and turn labels on and off, but otherwise, it is disappointing in its inability to electronically manipulate illustrations, a function that, theoretically, is a major advantage of an electronic version. Users should be able to cut portions of an illustration to the Windows' Clipboard to incorporate into another document. The only way, however, to export illustrations (or pieces of them) to other documents is to use third-party software for screen captures, and load these into Windows' Paintbrush (or other graphics programs) for manipulation. Users should expect such Edit functions as an integral part of graphics software such as *Atlas*.

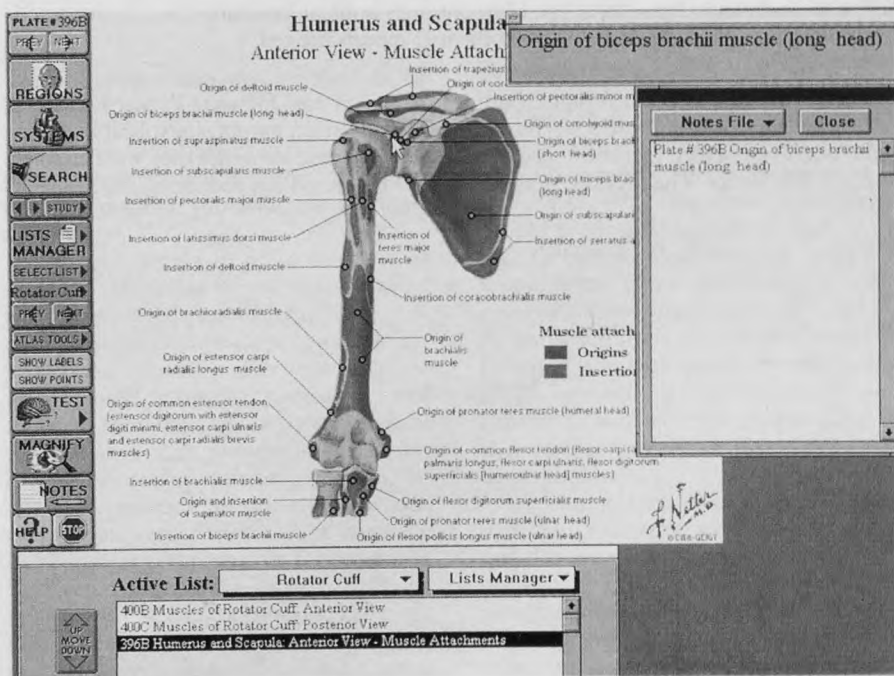


Figure 2. Illustrative anatomic plate. Note that the main window is fixed in the upper left of the screen, the bottom right corner being the Netter signature, occupying 480 × 640 pixels of a 600 × 800 pixel screen. As the mouse passes each black-and-white "point," the corresponding label is enlarged in the gray text box ("Origin of biceps . . ."), which is moveable (originally over the plate's title) but not resizable. A user-created "list" entitled "rotator cuff" has been dragged to the unoccupied bottom of the screen. The Notes box has also been opened and dragged to the right of the screen. Clicking any label while the box is open pops the plate number and the label into the Notes box, as illustrated.

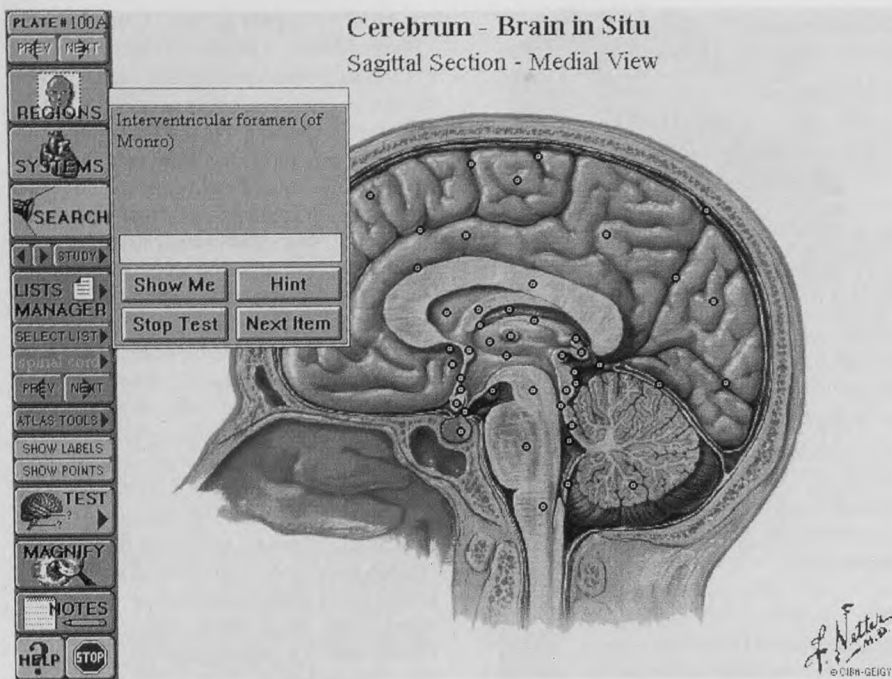


Figure 3. Screen appearance after selecting "Test" and then "Begin Practice Test." The user drags the pointer (mouse) to the black-and-white dot corresponding to the named anatomic structure and then clicks. A response of "That's Correct!" or "Try Again" appears in the rectangle above "Show Me." "Hint" hides all the dots except for about a half dozen. "Show Me" leaves only one dot visible. The test continues until all structures have been named. Order of presentation of material varies if the user repeats the test.

Users should also have significant control of the printing process, but I could not even select my color printer from within *Atlas*. The figures printed

nicely on my Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 560C printer, except, inexplicably, labels did not print, although they were enabled and visible on the monitor.

Another feature that would be worth a premium is some 3-D, rotatable views of major structures, with layers that users could peel like an onion, and video to illustrate functions so that one could "see" the extraocular muscles and heart in action, visualize the functional anatomy of the shoulder and rotator cuff, etc. With only 15% of the capacity of the current CD used, and 20-GB CDs supposedly just around the corner, if we dream it, perhaps Ciba will create it. They have made a good start.

Who should buy *Atlas*? Anybody electronically inclined who needs an anatomic atlas and who has a CD-drive available where the atlas is needed. If you are going to need some printed copy, test the printing of plates with labels immediately after purchase. If that fails, all is not necessarily lost. If you do not have a graphics program that provides for screen capture, purchase an inexpensive shareware screen capture program that allows you to select an area to capture. Then import the resultant capture file into Windows' Paintbrush or other graphics program, further manipulate, resize, add text to the picture if need be, and print it from Paintbrush or cut and paste it into your favorite application.

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