medical coding case studies with answers

Understanding Medical Coding Case Studies with Answers

Medical coding case studies with answers serve as invaluable learning tools for aspiring and experienced medical coders alike. These practical exercises bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, demonstrating how to accurately assign diagnostic and procedural codes based on patient documentation. By dissecting complex scenarios and understanding the rationale behind specific code selections, coders can hone their critical thinking skills and ensure compliance with industry standards. This article delves into the intricacies of medical coding case studies, exploring their benefits, common challenges, and providing illustrative examples with detailed explanations. We will examine how these case studies help demystify the coding process, improve coding accuracy, and ultimately contribute to efficient healthcare revenue cycle management. Understanding how to navigate these case studies is crucial for anyone involved in medical billing and coding.

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The Importance of Medical Coding Case Studies with Answers

In the dynamic field of healthcare, accurate medical coding is paramount. It forms the bedrock of patient record management, claims processing, and financial reimbursement. Medical coding case studies with answers are specifically designed to replicate the complexities encountered in daily

coding tasks. They provide a controlled environment where coders can practice applying coding guidelines, understanding physician documentation, and selecting the most appropriate ICD-10-CM, CPT, and HCPCS Level II codes. Without hands-on practice, it can be difficult to grasp the nuances of coding rules, especially when dealing with multiple diagnoses, complex procedures, or situations requiring significant medical necessity justification. These case studies act as a bridge, translating abstract coding principles into tangible skills.

Furthermore, the answers provided within these case studies are critical for self-assessment and learning. They allow coders to verify their understanding, identify areas of weakness, and learn from their mistakes. This iterative process of attempting a case study, reviewing the provided answer, and understanding the reasoning behind it is fundamental for skill development and long-term retention. The integration of real-world scenarios makes the learning process more engaging and relevant, preparing coders for the diverse and often challenging situations they will face in their professional careers.

Key Components of Medical Coding Case Studies

Effective medical coding case studies, especially those accompanied by answers, typically include several core components designed to mimic authentic clinical documentation. Understanding these elements is the first step in approaching any case study with confidence. These components ensure that the case study presents a realistic picture of patient encounters and the information a coder would need to assign accurate codes.

Patient Encounter Summaries

These sections provide a narrative of the patient's visit, detailing the reason for the encounter, the services provided, and the physician's findings. This narrative is the primary source of information for coding and requires careful review for key details such as symptoms, diagnoses, and the extent of services rendered.

Medical Documentation Excerpts

Often, case studies will include direct excerpts from the patient's medical record, such as physician's notes, operative reports, or diagnostic test results. These excerpts offer specific clinical data that is essential for accurate code assignment. Pay close attention to diagnostic statements, procedural descriptions, and any qualifying information.

Coding Guidelines and Conventions

While not always explicitly stated within each case study, the underlying principles of coding guidelines and conventions are what the case study tests. Understanding the Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting for ICD-10-CM, and the CPT® codebook's instructional notes is vital for correctly interpreting the documentation and selecting codes.

Questions for Coders

These are the prompts that guide the coder's task. They typically ask for specific codes (e.g., "Assign the appropriate ICD-10-CM code for the patient's primary diagnosis," or "Identify the CPT code(s) for the procedures performed"). Some questions may also ask for justification or supporting documentation references.

Answers and Explanations

This is arguably the most crucial part of the case study. The answers provide the correct code(s), and the explanations detail the rationale behind the selection. This includes referencing specific guidelines, identifying key terms in the documentation, and explaining why other codes might have been considered but rejected.

Common Challenges in Medical Coding Case Studies

Navigating medical coding case studies can present several challenges, even for experienced professionals. These challenges often stem from the ambiguity in documentation, the complexity of coding rules, and the need for a comprehensive understanding of medical terminology and anatomy. Recognizing these potential pitfalls is the first step towards overcoming them.

Ambiguous or Incomplete Documentation

One of the most frequent issues encountered is when the provided documentation is unclear, lacks specific details, or contains conflicting information. Coders must learn to query physicians for clarification when necessary, a skill that case studies can help develop by presenting such scenarios.

Sequencing of Diagnoses

Determining the principal diagnosis (the condition chiefly responsible for the patient's admission or encounter) can be complex. Case studies often present multiple co-existing conditions, requiring coders to understand the sequencing rules outlined in coding guidelines.

Understanding Medical Terminology and Anatomy

Accurate coding relies heavily on a solid understanding of medical terms, anatomical structures, and physiological processes. Case studies may feature specialized medical jargon or complex anatomical descriptions that require a strong foundation in medical knowledge.

Selecting the Correct Code Set and Modifiers

Choosing between ICD-10-CM, CPT, and HCPCS Level II codes, and applying appropriate modifiers,

can be challenging. Case studies that involve multiple services or unusual circumstances are particularly useful for practicing these skills.

Interpreting Physician Intent

Sometimes, the physician's documentation may imply a certain condition or service without explicitly stating it. Coders must learn to interpret this intent based on the overall clinical picture presented in the documentation, while adhering strictly to coding guidelines that often require explicit documentation.

Illustrative Medical Coding Case Study: Diagnosis Coding

Let's consider a case study focused on diagnosis coding. A 55-year-old male presents to his primary care physician with a two-week history of persistent cough, shortness of breath, and fever. The physician performs a physical examination, noting wheezing in the lower lobes of the lungs. A chest X-ray is ordered and reveals infiltrates consistent with pneumonia. The physician documents the diagnosis as "community-acquired pneumonia." The patient also has a history of hypertension, which is being managed by another physician.

Applying ICD-10-CM Codes

In this scenario, the primary diagnosis is community-acquired pneumonia. Looking up "pneumonia" in the ICD-10-CM index, we would find a main term and subterms. "Pneumonia, bacterial" or "Pneumonia, viral" might be options, but the documentation specifies "community-acquired pneumonia." This term often leads to a specific code. For instance, J18.9 (Pneumonia, unspecified organism) might be considered if the organism is not identified. However, if the documentation implies a specific type of pneumonia (e.g., lobar pneumonia), a more specific code could be used.

The patient's history of hypertension is a chronic condition. Since it is not the reason for the current visit and is not actively being treated by this physician, it would typically be coded as a secondary diagnosis. Hypertension is coded under I10 (Essential (primary) hypertension). The key here is to distinguish between conditions that are the focus of the current encounter and those that are relevant but not the primary driver of the visit. The coder must ascertain if the hypertension is being addressed or if it is simply part of the patient's past medical history influencing their overall health status.

Rationale for Code Selection

The answer would be ICD-10-CM code J18.9 for pneumonia, unspecified organism, as the specific causative agent for the community-acquired pneumonia is not documented. If the documentation had specified bacterial or viral pneumonia, a more precise code would be selected. For the hypertension, code I10 is appropriate because it is a known chronic condition of the patient, even

though it is not the primary reason for the current visit. The guidelines dictate that all conditions that coexist at the time of the encounter and affect patient care, treatment, or management should be reported. In this case, the pneumonia is the principal diagnosis, and hypertension is a significant co-morbidity.

Illustrative Medical Coding Case Study: Procedure Coding

Consider a patient undergoing an outpatient surgical procedure. A patient is admitted for an arthroscopic partial meniscectomy of the right knee. The operative report details the procedure performed by the orthopedic surgeon. The surgeon notes the insertion of a small camera and instruments through small incisions to visualize and remove the damaged portion of the meniscus. Post-operative, the patient is advised on physical therapy for rehabilitation.

Applying CPT Codes

For this case study, we need to select the appropriate CPT code for an arthroscopic partial meniscectomy of the knee. Searching the CPT index under "Arthroscopy, Knee" and then "Meniscectomy, Partial" would lead us to the relevant section. The procedure is performed arthroscopically. The codes for arthroscopic knee procedures are categorized by the specific structures addressed within the knee joint.

For a partial meniscectomy, the CPT code would be 29881 (Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; with meniscectomy (medial or lateral, including any portion of either meniscus); without chondroplasty). It's important to note the inclusion and exclusion terms associated with this code. For example, if chondroplasty (reshaping of cartilage) was also performed, a different code or an add-on code might be necessary.

Rationale for Code Selection

The CPT code 29881 is selected because it specifically describes an arthroscopic surgical procedure involving the removal of a portion of the meniscus in the knee. The operative report clearly states "arthroscopic partial meniscectomy." The key elements for selecting this code are the arthroscopic approach, the surgical nature of the intervention, and the specific target: partial meniscectomy. If the surgeon had removed the entire meniscus, a different code would apply. Similarly, if other procedures like ligament repair or meniscal repair were performed in addition to the meniscectomy, the coding would become more complex, potentially involving add-on codes or separate procedures based on the CPT guidelines.

Tips for Effectively Using Medical Coding Case Studies

with Answers

Maximizing the benefit derived from medical coding case studies with answers requires a strategic approach. Simply reading through the case and its solution is not enough to truly embed the learning. Active engagement and critical thinking are key to turning these exercises into powerful learning opportunities.

- **Read the entire case study carefully** before attempting to assign codes. Pay attention to all details, including patient history, symptoms, physician's notes, and any diagnostic findings.
- **Highlight key terms and phrases** in the documentation that are relevant to diagnosis and procedures. These are often the triggers for specific codes.
- Consult the official coding manuals (ICD-10-CM, CPT, HCPCS Level II) as you work through the case study. Do not rely solely on memory.
- Try to assign codes independently before looking at the provided answers. This simulates a real-world coding scenario.
- Thoroughly review the provided answers and explanations. Understand why a particular code was chosen and why other codes were not appropriate.
- **Identify any areas of confusion or error** in your own code assignments. Use these as opportunities to deepen your understanding of specific coding rules or guidelines.
- **Revisit case studies** periodically to reinforce learning and ensure long-term retention of coding principles.
- **Discuss challenging case studies** with colleagues or instructors to gain different perspectives and insights.

Benefits of Practicing with Medical Coding Case Studies

The consistent practice of working through medical coding case studies with answers yields a multitude of benefits for coding professionals. These benefits extend beyond simply passing an exam, contributing to a more proficient, accurate, and confident coder.

Enhanced Diagnostic and Procedural Understanding

Case studies expose coders to a wide array of medical conditions and surgical procedures, deepening their understanding of both. This exposure helps in recognizing patterns and accurately

interpreting medical documentation.

Improved Code Selection Accuracy

By applying learned principles to realistic scenarios and receiving immediate feedback through answers, coders refine their ability to select the most precise and appropriate codes, reducing errors and claim denials.

Development of Critical Thinking Skills

Many case studies present complex or ambiguous situations that require coders to think critically, weigh options, and apply judgment based on coding guidelines and clinical context.

Familiarity with Coding Guidelines and Conventions

Regular practice with case studies reinforces the application of official coding guidelines, instructional notes, and coding conventions, making them second nature.

Preparation for Certification Exams and Real-World Job Performance

Case studies are excellent preparation for medical coding certification exams (like CPC, CCS, RHS) and are directly applicable to the daily demands of a coding professional's job.

Increased Coding Efficiency

As coders become more familiar with scenarios and confident in their code selection, their speed and efficiency in processing claims improve.

Frequently Asked Questions

A patient presents with a sudden onset of severe chest pain radiating to the left arm, accompanied by diaphoresis and nausea. EKG shows ST-segment elevation. The physician diagnoses an acute ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) and performs a successful percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) with stent placement. What are the primary

diagnosis and procedure codes for this encounter?

The primary diagnosis code would likely be I21.3 (ST-elevation (STEMI) myocardial infarction of unspecified site) or a more specific code if the site is documented. The primary procedure code would be 92941 (Percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty (PTCA) for acute occlusion during initial infarction, with intracoronary stent insertion). Additional codes for complications, medications, or other interventions may also be applicable based on the full documentation.

A patient is admitted for elective surgery to repair a complex abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). During the surgery, a rupture of the AAA is discovered, requiring immediate conversion to an open repair. What is the most appropriate principal diagnosis code to reflect the intraoperative complication?

The principal diagnosis code should reflect the condition that occasioned the admission for surgery and was the focus of the operative procedure. Therefore, it would be the code for the abdominal aortic aneurysm, such as I71.4 (Abdominal aortic aneurysm, without rupture). The intraoperative complication of rupture would then be coded as a secondary diagnosis. The procedure codes would reflect the conversion to open repair.

A patient is seen for a follow-up appointment after a successful chemotherapy course for stage III breast cancer. The patient reports experiencing significant neuropathy in their hands and feet as a side effect. The physician documents 'chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy'. What is the most appropriate ICD-10-CM code for the neuropathy?

The most appropriate ICD-10-CM code would be G62.9 (Polyneuropathy, unspecified) with an additional code from category T45.- (Adverse effects of antineoplastic and other drugs) specifying the drug that caused the neuropathy. However, if the documentation is specific enough to link the neuropathy directly to a known chemotherapy agent and its adverse effect, a more precise code might be used. It's crucial to check the ICD-10-CM index for 'neuropathy, drug-induced' or 'adverse effect, drug'.

A pregnant patient presents at 32 weeks gestation with preeclampsia. She develops seizures, indicating eclampsia. What are the principal diagnosis codes for this patient's admission?

The principal diagnosis codes would be O15.0 (Eclampsia complicating pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium) and O14.1 (Severe pre-eclampsia). The eclampsia code (O15.0) generally takes precedence as the principal diagnosis because it represents the more severe, acute complication. The specific trimester of pregnancy should also be coded.

A patient undergoes a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. During the procedure, the surgeon encounters significant adhesions from a previous abdominal surgery, making the dissection difficult. The operative report notes 'scar tissue causing adhesions'. What ICD-10-CM code best represents the adhesions that complicated the surgery?

The best ICD-10-CM code for adhesions complicating surgery would be K66.0 (Peritoneal adhesions). This code indicates the presence of adhesions that interfere with the surgical procedure. It's important to note that K66.0 is typically assigned as a secondary diagnosis when it's a complicating factor identified during surgery.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to medical coding case studies with answers, each with a short description:

- 1. The ICD-10-CM Coder's Challenge: Real-World Case Studies with Solutions
 This book offers a comprehensive collection of practical case studies designed to test and refine coders' skills in the ICD-10-CM coding system. It covers a wide range of medical specialties and complexity levels, providing detailed explanations for each correct answer. Coders will find this an invaluable tool for mastering accurate diagnostic coding in diverse clinical scenarios.
- 2. CPC Exam Prep: Applied Case Studies for Certified Professional Coders
 Tailored for aspiring Certified Professional Coders (CPCs), this resource presents realistic patient scenarios that mirror those found on the CPC exam. Each case study is accompanied by thorough answer keys and rationales that break down the coding process. It's an essential study guide for building confidence and competence in applying CPT, HCPCS Level II, and ICD-10-CM codes.
- 3. Mastering Medical Coding: Advanced Case Studies and Auditing Scenarios
 This book delves into more complex coding situations, including those involving multiple diagnoses, procedures, and modifiers. It also incorporates auditing scenarios, prompting readers to identify potential errors and suggest corrections. For experienced coders seeking to enhance their expertise and understanding of compliance, this is a highly recommended text.
- 4. HIM Coding Practice: Case-Based Learning for Health Information Professionals

 Designed for Health Information Management (HIM) professionals, this book utilizes a case-based approach to reinforce fundamental coding principles and practices. It features a variety of patient encounters and clinical documentation, allowing coders to practice their skills in a simulated environment. The included answer keys and explanations promote a deeper understanding of coding guidelines and best practices.
- 5. Anatomy & Physiology for Coders: Case Studies in Application
 This unique resource bridges the gap between anatomical and physiological knowledge and medical coding application. Through detailed case studies, readers learn how to interpret medical reports by understanding the underlying body systems and conditions described. Each scenario includes coding answers with clear justifications linked back to anatomical and physiological principles.

- 6. The Outpatient Coder's Workbook: ICD-10-CM and CPT Case Simulations
 Focusing specifically on outpatient coding, this workbook provides a rich collection of case studies that reflect common ambulatory care settings. It emphasizes the correct application of ICD-10-CM for diagnoses and CPT for procedures performed in outpatient environments. The provided solutions and explanations are designed to help coders improve their efficiency and accuracy.
- 7. Specialty Coding Casebook: Cardiology, Orthopedics, and More
 This book offers in-depth case studies across various medical specialties, allowing coders to
 specialize their learning. It addresses the unique coding challenges and nuances found in fields like
 cardiology, orthopedics, and general surgery. With comprehensive answers and detailed rationale,
 coders can build expertise in specific areas of medical coding.
- 8. Coding for Reimbursement: Case Studies in Revenue Cycle Management
 This practical guide uses case studies to illustrate how accurate medical coding directly impacts reimbursement and revenue cycle management. Readers will work through scenarios where coding choices influence billing and payment outcomes. The book provides answers and explanations that highlight the financial implications of correct coding practices.
- 9. The EHR Coder's Toolkit: Navigating Electronic Health Records with Case Studies
 This resource addresses the evolving landscape of medical coding within electronic health record
 (EHR) systems. Through case studies that simulate working with EHR-generated documentation,
 coders learn to extract relevant information and apply appropriate codes. The included answers and
 walkthroughs help coders optimize their efficiency and accuracy when using digital patient records.

Medical Coding Case Studies With Answers

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Medical Coding Case Studies with Answers: A Comprehensive Guide to Mastering Healthcare Billing

This ebook delves into the intricacies of medical coding through a series of detailed case studies, providing practical application of coding principles and offering valuable insights for students, aspiring coders, and experienced professionals seeking to enhance their skills and stay abreast of evolving industry standards. The goal is to build confidence and competence in navigating the complexities of accurate and compliant medical billing.

Ebook Title: Mastering Medical Coding: Case Studies and Practical Applications

Contents:

Introduction: The Importance of Accurate Medical Coding and the Scope of this Guide

Chapter 1: Understanding the Fundamentals of Medical Coding: ICD-10-CM, CPT, HCPCS.

Chapter 2: Case Study 1: Hospital Inpatient Coding: Diagnosis and Procedure Coding in a Complex Scenario.

Chapter 3: Case Study 2: Outpatient Coding: Evaluating and Coding Physician Services in a Clinic Setting.

Chapter 4: Case Study 3: Emergency Department Coding: Addressing Time Sensitivity and Ambiguity in ED Encounters.

Chapter 5: Case Study 4: Specialty Coding (Cardiology): Focusing on specific coding challenges in a niche area.

Chapter 6: Advanced Coding Concepts and Challenges: Modifier Usage, Unbundling, and Auditing.

Chapter 7: Staying Current with Coding Updates and Compliance: Resources and Strategies for Continuous Learning.

Conclusion: Key Takeaways and Next Steps for Professional Development.

Detailed Outline Explanation:

Introduction: This section will establish the critical role of medical coding in healthcare finance and patient care, emphasizing the potential consequences of errors and the need for accurate coding practices. It will also provide a brief overview of the ebook's structure and learning objectives.

Chapter 1: Understanding the Fundamentals of Medical Coding: This chapter will serve as a refresher on essential coding systems such as the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM), Current Procedural Terminology (CPT), and Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS). It will cover basic coding principles, rules, and guidelines.

Chapter 2: Case Study 1: Hospital Inpatient Coding: This case study will present a detailed inpatient scenario, requiring the reader to identify the correct ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes and CPT procedure codes based on provided patient documentation. A step-by-step solution will be provided with explanations for each code selection.

Chapter 3: Case Study 2: Outpatient Coding: This case study will focus on outpatient encounters, demanding accurate selection of CPT codes for physician services rendered in a clinic setting. The complexities of evaluation and management (E&M) coding will be addressed.

Chapter 4: Case Study 3: Emergency Department Coding: This case study will highlight the unique challenges of coding in the emergency department, emphasizing time constraints, incomplete information, and the need for accurate documentation to support coding choices.

Chapter 5: Case Study 4: Specialty Coding (Cardiology): This case study will provide focused training on a specific medical specialty, showcasing the nuances and intricacies of coding within that field. This allows for deeper understanding beyond general coding principles.

Chapter 6: Advanced Coding Concepts and Challenges: This chapter will delve into more complex coding issues such as modifier usage, the prevention of unbundling, and the importance of regular auditing practices to maintain compliance.

Chapter 7: Staying Current with Coding Updates and Compliance: This chapter will provide readers with essential resources and strategies for staying updated on changes in coding guidelines,

regulations, and compliance requirements. It will cover the importance of continuing education and professional development.

Conclusion: The conclusion will summarize the key concepts covered throughout the ebook, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and professional growth in medical coding. It will offer recommendations for further learning and resources.

(Body of the Ebook - Case Studies with Answers - This section would contain detailed case studies with comprehensive answers and explanations. Due to the length constraints, examples are provided below, a full ebook would include multiple detailed case studies.)

Case Study 1: Hospital Inpatient Coding

Scenario: A 65-year-old male patient is admitted to the hospital with chest pain. After a thorough workup, he is diagnosed with acute myocardial infarction (AMI) and acute coronary syndrome (ACS). He undergoes percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) with stent placement. He also has a history of hypertension and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Question: What are the appropriate ICD-10-CM and CPT codes for this case?

Answer:

ICD-10-CM Codes:

I21.09: Acute myocardial infarction of unspecified type

I25.10: Unstable angina

I10: Essential (primary) hypertension

E11.9: Type 2 diabetes mellitus without complications

CPT Codes:

92928: Percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty (PTCA), single vessel

92980: Placement of drug-eluting coronary artery stent

Case Study 2: Outpatient Coding

Scenario: A 30-year-old female patient presents to her physician's office for a routine well-woman exam. The physician performs a complete history and physical examination, ordering routine lab work.

Question: What is the appropriate CPT code for this encounter?

Answer: The appropriate CPT code depends on the level of complexity of the visit. More information is needed to determine if it's a 99211-99215 level. Let's assume a detailed history and exam with low medical decision-making leads to 99213. Further information regarding the complexity of the visit

would be needed.

(Further case studies with similar detail would follow in the full ebook.)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

- 1. What is the difference between ICD-10-CM and CPT codes? ICD-10-CM codes classify diagnoses, while CPT codes describe procedures and services.
- 2. How do I stay up-to-date on medical coding changes? Subscribe to coding updates from organizations like the AMA and AAPC, attend conferences, and utilize online resources.
- 3. What are the consequences of inaccurate medical coding? Inaccurate coding can lead to claim denials, financial losses, audits, and legal repercussions.
- 4. What resources are available for medical coders? The AAPC, AHIMA, and AMA offer certifications, training, and resources.
- 5. What is the role of modifiers in medical coding? Modifiers provide additional information about procedures or services, clarifying circumstances and improving accuracy.
- 6. How can I improve my medical coding skills? Practice with case studies, participate in continuing education, and seek mentorship from experienced coders.
- 7. What are some common coding errors to avoid? Unbundling, incorrect code selection, and missing essential information are common errors.
- 8. What is the importance of medical coding compliance? Compliance ensures adherence to regulations, minimizing risks and maintaining ethical practices.
- 9. Where can I find reliable medical coding resources? Reputable sources include the CMS, AMA, AAPC, and AHIMA websites.

Related Articles:

- 1. The Ultimate Guide to ICD-10-CM Coding: A comprehensive overview of the ICD-10-CM system and its application.
- 2. Mastering CPT Coding: A Practical Approach: A detailed guide to understanding and applying CPT codes in various medical settings.
- 3. Medical Coding Compliance: A Practical Guide to Avoiding Audits: Strategies for ensuring compliance and minimizing audit risks.
- 4. Advanced Medical Coding Techniques: Mastering Modifiers and Unbundling: An in-depth exploration of complex coding concepts.
- 5. Medical Coding for Outpatient Settings: A focused guide to accurate coding for outpatient encounters.
- 6. Medical Coding for Emergency Departments: Addressing the unique challenges of coding in emergency situations.
- 7. Medical Coding for Cardiology: A specialized guide to coding in the field of cardiology.
- 8. The Role of Medical Coders in Healthcare Revenue Cycle Management: Examines the significance of medical coding in the revenue cycle.
- 9. How to Choose the Right Medical Coding Certification: A guide to selecting the most suitable certification for career advancement.

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