

“Alligators All Around” and the ICD-10 code set

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With the changeover from ICD-9 to ICD-10 codes has come a tremendous expansion in the number of diagnosis codes, from 14,025 to 69,823,¹ covering an amazing number of conditions. One newspaper story I read pointed out that there are codes for being bitten by an alligator and for being sucked into a jet engine. I investigated further,² and found out that there are actually 12 separate codes for encounters with an alligator (table 1). It is surprising that there are not separate codes for alligator-related injuries to the left vs the right side of the body, given the ICD-10 penchant for identifying laterality whenever possible (and even when it is not possible—there are

separate codes for aneurysmal subarachnoid hemorrhage from the “left anterior communicating artery,” I60.22, from the “right anterior communicating artery,” I60.21, and from an “unspecified anterior communicating artery,” I60.20).

Obviously, this is a situation that is ripe for parody. My wife, Elizabeth, also a physician, commented that “bitten by alligator” made her think of “Alligators All Around,” a Carole King song which we fondly remember listening to and singing with our children when they were young (they are all now grown up and married). The two of us can still sing it today, mostly from memory. Her comment prompted me to do some searching of the ICD-10 codes,² and I managed to find codes that were (more or less) appropriate for all 26 lines of “Alligators All Around.” The results are shown in table 2. Those wishing to listen to Carole King singing “Alligators All Around” can find it on YouTube or download an mp3 file.

Table 1 Codes for encounters with an alligator

ICD-10 code	ICD-10 code description ²
W58.01XA	Bitten by alligator, initial encounter
W58.01XD	Bitten by alligator, subsequent encounter
W58.01XS	Bitten by alligator, sequela
W58.02XA	Struck by alligator, initial encounter
W58.02XD	Struck by alligator, subsequent encounter
W58.02XS	Struck by alligator, sequela
W58.03XA	Crushed by alligator, initial encounter
W58.03XD	Crushed by alligator, subsequent encounter
W58.03XS	Crushed by alligator, sequela
W58.09XA	Other contact with alligator, initial encounter
W58.09XD	Other contact with alligator, subsequent encounter
W58.09XS	Other contact with alligator, sequela

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Table 2 Codes that are (more or less) appropriate for all 26 lines of “Alligators All Around”

Song lyric	ICD-10 code	ICD-10 code description ²
A: Alligators all around	W58.03XA	Crushed by alligator, initial encounter
B: Bursting balloons	V96.05XA	Balloon explosion injuring occupant, initial encounter
C: Catching colds	J00	Acute nasopharyngitis (common cold)
D: Doing dishes	T55.0X1A	Toxic effect of soaps, accidental (unintentional), initial encounter
E: Entertaining elephants	W55.89XA	Other contact with other mammals, initial encounter
F: Forever fooling	F68.10	Factitious disorder, unspecified
G: Getting giggles	F48.2	Pseudobulbar affect
H: Having headaches	R51	Headache
I: Imitating Indians	R48.8	Other symbolic dysfunctions (includes echolalia)
J: Juggling jellybeans	T17.428A	Food in trachea causing other injury, initial encounter
K: Keeping kangaroos	W55.89XD	Other contact with other mammals, subsequent encounter
L: Looking like lions	W56.19XA	Other contact with sea lion, initial encounter
M: Making macaroni	Y93.G3	Activity, cooking and baking (external cause of injury)
N: Never napping	G47.00	Insomnia, unspecified
O: Ordering oatmeal	L27.2	Dermatitis due to ingested food (cereal is explicitly mentioned)
P: Pushing people	F63.81	Intermittent explosive disorder
Q: Quite quarrelsome	R45.4	Irritability and anger
R: Riding reindeer	W55.39XA	Other contact with other hoof stock, initial encounter
S: Shockingly spoiled	F34.9	Persistent mood (affective) disorder, unspecified
T: Throwing tantrums	F91.8	Other conduct disorders (including childhood tantrums)
U: Usually upside down	Y93.34	Activity, bungee jumping
V: Very vain	F60.81	Narcissistic personality disorder
W: Wearing wigs	L65.8	Other specified nonscarring hair loss
X: X-ing x's	F81.81	Disorder of written expression (including developmental agraphia)
Y: Yackety-yacking	F30.10	Manic episode without psychotic symptoms, unspecified
Z: Zippity zound	H93.19	Tinnitus, unspecified ear

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