

Improve Your Revenue Cycle

HIM staff can help find the ideal balance between revenue and compliance.

ALTHOUGH IMPROVING REVENUE cycle management is a dear priority in health care facilities, the importance of coding in the process has all too frequently been overlooked by top administrators.

Recently, though, the HIM professional's role has been recognized as an integral part of the revenue cycle. Now, a closer look is being taken at all departments where charges are entered, including ancillary service departments. These departments may vary by facility but typically include radiology, the emergency room and labs. Charge capture in all these departments must be carefully reviewed to ensure that all codes are accurately recorded.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

The process starts at the patient's point of entry. Areas on the front end—such as registration—should be examined to ensure that all necessary patient data is captured at admission.

A credentialed coding professional should periodically observe registration to look for any shortcuts being used that might be resulting in errors that can impact the revenue cycle.

HIM staff can then take steps to help educate registration staff about how their work influences the revenue cycle as well as patient care.

The billing department is another key focus when analyzing the revenue cycle, with a goal of assuring that all codes are being charged correctly for each patient.

Augmented by the use of claim scrubber software on the back end of the billing cycle, the result is that the billing department will be more likely to generate clean claims for submission to payers.

When examining billing, it is also vital to have access to the chargemaster, which contains prices for the services a facility provides and is used to generate a patient's bill. Chargemaster maintenance software packages can be a wise investment to assist in updating code changes and billing requirements. In the future, more and more facilities will place coders in the billing department to compare chargemaster data with coded data to

identify any possible issues.

ACHIEVING THE IDEAL BALANCE

A facility that runs at optimal efficiency is one that achieves the correct balance of revenue and compliance.

Although HIM professionals are often tasked with verifying that patient bills secure the maximum amount of revenue possible, they must also ensure that coding is compliant with regulatory guidelines. Codes applied must be supported with appropriate documentation.

A significant challenge in speeding the revenue cycle is pinpointing the areas in need of improvement. To identify these trouble spots, a facility should develop procedures to audit for improvement.

Many staffing firms offer audit services to assist facilities that may not have the resources to conduct an audit on their own. These consultants can perform a variety of audits, chargemaster reviews and workflow assessments to identify errors and opportunities to enhance the revenue cycle. They work with coders and ancillary staff to analyze procedures and make recommendations for improvement. Many of these consultants also offer educational workshops on topics such as improving the revenue cycle through inpatient and outpatient coding and preparing for recovery audit contractors (RACs).

Audits and staff education are key factors that influence revenue cycle efficiency. When opportunities for improvement are identified and staff members are knowledgeable of best practices and ever-changing regulatory guidelines, health care facilities will find that the ideal balance of revenue and compliance is within reach. ■

Audits and staff education are key factors that influence revenue cycle efficiency. When opportunities for improvement are identified and staff members are knowledgeable of best practices and ever-changing regulatory guidelines, health care facilities will find that the ideal balance of revenue and compliance is within reach. ■

Michelle Martin is group vice president of Kforce Healthcare Staffing (www.kforce.com), a professional staffing firm providing contract and direct hire staffing for HIM departments. Consultant services include onsite and/or offsite delivery of coding specialists, APC and DRG audits, HIM directors, transcriptionists, certified tumor registrars, trauma registrars as well as other outsourced personnel. Contact Martin at mmartin@kforce.com.

Sponsored by Kforce Healthcare Staffing

