

By Michelle Martin

RESOURCE CENTER

Keys to a Clean MPI

Eliminating duplicate records from the master patient index is sure to improve patient care and operational efficiencies.

A CLEAN AND ACCURATE master patient index (MPI) is an important resource all health care facilities should strive to maintain. Duplicate patient records can greatly decrease the quality of patient data, as multiple records for one patient usually means the patient's information is scattered in two or more records in the system.

For many health care facilities, staff members often do not realize that more than one record exists for a patient until a problem arises. Treating a patient with an incomplete medical record can result in misdiagnosis and treatment errors. Staff must be able to accurately identify and access a patient's full medical history for a hospital to provide the best possible care. To promote patient safety and quality care, HIM directors must ensure a process is in place for cleaning up the MPI, minimizing the duplication of patient information.

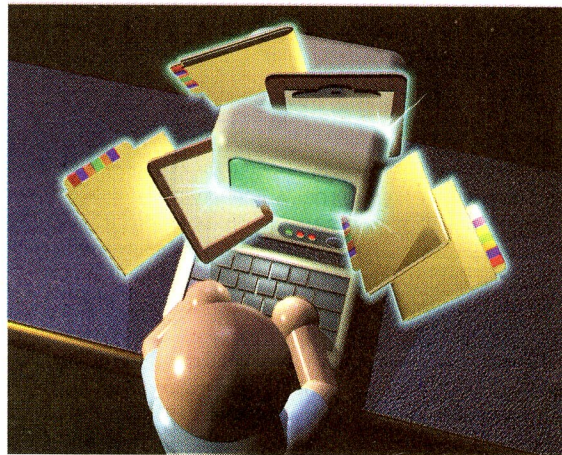
Before beginning to rid the system of duplicates, HIM directors should assess the situation and create an MPI clean up plan. It is important to determine just how many duplicates exist in order to decide the amount of time and manpower the project will require. An MPI coordinator should be named and, for many facilities, temporary staff may need to be hired depending on the extent of clean up needed. Supplemental staff can assist with either merging duplicate records electronically, or physically combining charts.

To prevent MPI clean up from disrupting day-to-day activities in the HIM department, outsourcing MPI clean up is a viable option. Many staffing firms offer clean up services, providing seasoned MPI clean up staff who use a proven process to effectively eliminate errors. These consultants customize their approach based on a facility's needs and often bring in software tools to quickly consolidate duplicate records.

CLEANING AND SUSTAINING

The first step toward a tidy MPI is to pinpoint duplicates and analyze them to validate that they are real duplicates. Staff should then merge the records and address why more than one record was created in the first place.

Perhaps the most important step in the clean up process is to institute changes to help reduce the creation of new duplicates. Registration is the department where duplicates are born and therefore, the key to preventing future record duplication.



Regular quality training should make registrars aware of current duplicate rates and provide them with examples of registration errors that caused these duplicates so they can correct these issues going forward. HIM managers should periodically observe registration staff at work to look for shortcuts being used that might be resulting in errors.

Most importantly, quality training should ensure that registration staff members understand how their work directly impacts the patient's record and the care they will receive. Proper registration is critical to keeping patient data complete and accurate when a patient comes in for care.

As facilities move to EHRs, proper attention should be paid to maintaining a duplicate-free MPI. For most facilities, having an MPI in electronic form decreases the number of unnecessary records and makes it easier to cross reference data elements to avoid future duplication. Eliminating duplicate records from the MPI is sure to improve patient care and operational efficiencies at any health care facility by ensuring that physicians have access to each patient's complete and accurate medical information. ■

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