Gwinnett Hosital System identifies $16.3 million in net financial improvement

Incorrect charges and charge omissions on patient bills is a common mistake that leads to significant lost revenue. Often only retrospective audits identify the significant financial gaps of this "silent" negative impact to the bottom line. With increased margin pressures and shrinking reimbursements, health care providers should focus on automation and solid processes to validate all charges have been captured on claims prior to submission.

Gwinnett Hospital System (GHS), a 553-bed not-for-profit health care network located in a suburb of metropolitan Atlanta with net patient revenue of $699 million, implemented nThrive's Claims and Billing Solutions in its goal to automate and optimize charge captures.

Challenge

GHS had a revenue integrity department staffed with two charge audit nurses, two charge analysts, a chargemaster coordinator. Staff, however, lacked an automated solution to help enhance and streamline the charge capture process. GHS also needed a tool that would help to identify the financial value the department was delivering by capturing net revenue.

Solution

GHS selected a variety of nThrive's financial improvement technology, including the Charge Capture Audit tool to help the revenue integrity department identify missed patient charges prior to claims being submitted. Complementing the benefits of Charge Capture Audit, was the deployment of nThrive's Revenue Cycle Services to address chargemaster management and conduct comparative rate modeling.

Charge Capture Audit is a web-based tool that provides electronic audits for all inpatient and outpatient bills based on multiple sources with more than 12,000 business-driven rules. It is designed to flag charging issues based on clinical practice guidelines and Medicare coding requirements. The tool will reflect updated rules as needed and new rules are introduced monthly; meanwhile clients are able to develop their own custom rules.

Michelle Johnson-Bolden, Director of Revenue Integrity, GHS, noted how Charge Capture Audit helped facilitate communication and efficiency among various departments involved in the charge capture process.

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Identified in net financial improvement

"Simply put, accurate charge capture creates cleaner claims and fewer denials," said Johnson-Bolden. "The technology that Charge Capture Audit offers is much higher and more evolved than some of the other tools out there."

Results

Within the first fiscal year after the launch of the enhanced version of Charge Capture Audit, GHS captured $1 million in net revenue and reduced reviewed accounts by 50 percent. Overall the initiative has led to $16.3 million in net financial improvement.

"Our revenue integrity team has been able to reduce missed charges, increase compliance and reduce reworking accounts because of improved rules editing with nThrive's Charge Capture Audit," said Johnson-Bolden. "We were able to see significant results in productivity and workflow, and because our savings were so substantial, we were able to reallocate that money and hire two more charge nurses to our staff."

In addition, two key process improvement opportunities were identified and corrected through Charge Capture Audit, resulting in increased accuracy and enhanced revenue. In the radiology department charge accuracy improved from 44 to 100 percent after identifying and correcting incorrect coding for biopsies. In addition, $90,000 in missed charges from the nuclear medicine department were identified over a 10-month period. An underlying system issue was preventing the correct clinical charges from being sent to the patient accounting department, resulting in undercharges. The correction and staff education resulted in a jump in accuracy from 51 to 100 percent.

"After seeing the positive results, our clinical departments began using Charge Capture Audit directly to further increase our efficiency, improve our rules editing and compliance and capture more charges," added Johnson-Bolden. "Charge Capture Audit enables us to work within one tool, and the entire process has helped our clinical staff move away from performing non-clinical data entry, which allows them to be more productive."

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> **MICHELLE JOHNSON-BOLDEN, DIRECTOR REVENUE INTEGRITY, GWINNETT HOSPITAL SYSTEM**

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