

VVRMC reduces AR days by 36 percent in 120 days

nThrive Coding outsource helps improve both coding and financial performance

Business issue

Val Verde Regional Medical Center (VVRMC) was challenged with limited coding training resources, which resulted in a high DNFB of 14 days and a negative impact on coding accuracy, productivity and ultimately, revenue.



Overview

Val Verde Regional Medical Center is a Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality-accredited 93-bed level IV trauma center serving Del Rio, Texas, and the neighboring communities. Since 1959, VVRMC has made local health care and medical treatment its first priority and has expanded its facility, enhanced its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and added new services, improved its efficiency and staffed a team of caring health professionals. Services include hospice care, a full-service imaging center, respiratory care, inpatient dialysis, rehabilitation services and a special procedures unit including a cardiac catheterization lab.

36%

reduction in AR days
in just **120 days** after
implementation of
the nThrive coding
outsourcer

Problem

Following ongoing financial challenges, VVRMC appointed a new CEO and a new HIM Director and Privacy Officer to help reinvigorate the coding operation. The new HIM Director, Brad Jones, discovered that the organization's coding staff needed more training and resources to help them succeed. VVRMC was also challenged by a medical staff who did not fully comply on documentation timeliness and completeness goals, hindering coders from performing their jobs efficiently. The result – accuracy, productivity and ultimately, revenue, were falling short of expectations set by Jones and the senior leadership team. The issues were manifested in five red flags noted by Jones:

- Lack of pathways and education to achieve coder certification
- Relatively high Discharged Not Final Billed (DNFB), averaging 13 to 14 days
- Frequent coding-related denials

- Deficient assignment of Complicating or Comorbid Condition (CC), Major Complicating or Comorbid Condition (MCC), Severity of Illness and Risk of Mortality
- Lower-than-anticipated reimbursement levels

Solution

Although VVRMC had used temporary outsourced coders to augment its team, Jones and VVRMC sought a more complete remedy to their coding challenges. Since Del Rio is a small, rural community, the availability of local certified coders was limited. VVRMC management selected nThrive as its partner to fully outsource the coding function. The outsource engagement included a coding manager, who started on-site and then transitioned into a remote role on the team.

"Having the nThrive coding manager in-person every day for the first six weeks made for a successful implementation of the coding solution; the manager built solid rapport with all the players who interface with the coding team," remarked Jones.

Following initial on-site time, the nThrive Coding Manager held weekly calls with Jones to ensure clear communication and timely attention to any needs. As the new remote coding team settled in, greater emphasis on improving accuracy and productivity became the focus. The coders collaborated with CDI specialists and VVRMC's new Coding Liaison to produce clear and complete clinical documentation that would lead to improved coding outcomes. "The nThrive team really focused on the accuracy and charts-by-hour productivity standards we put in place," said Jones.



In large part due to nThrive's improvements in coding performance, VVRMC's overall financial performance went from monthly losses to gains."

BRAD JONES, HIM DIRECTOR AND PRIVACY OFFICER, VVRMC

Value

The nThrive team adopted VVRMC's concurrent inpatient coding practice, coding while the patient was still in-house, in order to help address VVRMC's DNFB issues. Just 120 days after implementation of the coding outsource team, VVRMC reduced its AR days by 36 percent (five days), achieving the CFO's goal. This threshold continues to be sustained. Additionally, coding-related denials have been minimized, and more accurate assignment of CC, MCCs, Severity of Illness and Risk of Mortality has become a standard practice.

Several months after the nThrive team was deployed, a more profound improvement was realized. After many months in the red financially in 2015, in 2016 VVRMC was in the black. "In large part due to nThrive's improvements in coding performance," noted Jones, "VVRMC's overall financial performance went from monthly losses to gains."

VVRMC is pleased with the financial wellspring nThrive's coding team has delivered and is exploring ways to expand the current partnership. "Not only did nThrive help our coding operations, but they also made helpful recommendations for overall revenue cycle performance," said Jones. "nThrive brings a much bigger platter of solutions to the table than just coding services, such as CDI consulting and on-line education, which we will be taking advantage of soon."



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