

# CDI program results help Conway Regional Health System win governor's award

Conway Regional Health System has been serving the health care needs of the communities of north central Arkansas since 1938. Like all U.S. health care institutions in recent years, Conway Regional has been faced with an increasing need for greater specificity in medical documentation to maintain quality of care, optimize reimbursement and prepare for the transition to ICD-10.

While the organization had attempted to implement a Clinical Documentation Improvement (CDI) program in the past, and made some progress, without any structure in place for long-term maintenance, the program had fallen by the wayside.

Then one day, Conway Regional's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), including Chief Financial Officer Steve Rose, opened an issue of Modern Healthcare and found that Conway Regional Health System had been ranked the fourth highest in the nation in terms of mortality rates, essentially portraying Conway as a place one should avoid for health care. At that moment, Rose and the rest of the ELT realized that something needed to be done to make any CDI gains more impactful and sustainable. After having a third party company evaluate the quality of care at Conway Regional, the ELT found what they suspected, it wasn't the quality of care that had led to such high mortality rates. In fact, a simple failure to properly document the care provided, especially the severity of illness (SOI) and risk of mortality (ROM), had led to above-average mortality rates. Since the patient documentation wasn't taking into account how sick certain patients were, on paper it looked like the hospital was doing a poor job of caring for them.

That's when Conway Regional sought the help of nThrive\* through a CDI consulting and outsourcing program. nThrive immediately placed two Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists (CDIS) on-site at Conway Regional and implemented the nThrive CDI Technology, nThrive's revolutionary CDI technology that automates the CDI program from end to end. With the nThrive CDI Technology, the organization had a tool to manage CDI case workflow and manage the physician query process.

An immediate task was to educate physicians on the importance of specificity in their documentation, especially in regard to severity of illness and risk of mortality.

"Once our doctors realized what an overriding issue the high mortality index was and how it was impacting the reputation not only of the hospital, but of them as well, they became concerned and were interested in how the CDI program could help," said Rose.



## 66.3% reduction

in congestive  
heart failure (CHF)  
mortality index –  
from 2.08 to 0.7  
**in 12 months**

Initiatives put into place by the nThrive CDI program included:

- **Physician education** – Using on-line CDI training through nThrive Education and one-on-one education with the nThrive CDISs, Conway Regional physicians learned the importance of quality documentation and how to change old habits.
- **Improved reporting** – The nThrive CDI Technology allows the CDIS to provide a monthly report to Conway Regional's ELT so they can keep abreast of crucial statistics such as physician query response and acceptance rates. Once per quarter, nThrive meets with the ELT to discuss quality indicators and performance of the program.
- **Refocused Physician Committee** – Conway Regional refocused its existing physician-led committee emphasizing documentation improvement and its impact on reporting of mortality rates.
- **Integration of EMR and CDI** – By integrating the hospital's Electronic Medical Record System with the nThrive CDI Technology, the CDI team can now send queries to physicians directly through the EMR, ensuring more visibility and better, more timely response rates.
- **Mortality rounds** – The CDISs now participate in mortality rounds to ensure the proper documentation of SOI and ROM.
- **Query templates** – nThrive provides ICD-10 prepared query templates for specific areas of care, making the query process more efficient, and improving documentation specificity.
- **Query escalation process** – An escalation process was put into place for unanswered queries, and a physician champion was assigned as a liaison between the CDISs and the physician staff.

## The turnaround results

As a result of nThrive's CDI program, resources and technology, Conway Regional has achieved a remarkable turnaround. The mortality rate index for pneumonia\*\* dropped from 2.0 to 0.97 in one year, essentially cut in half. The mortality rate index for Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI)\*\* went from 1.79 to 0.47 in one year. The Case Mix Index (CMI) also improved, from an average of 1.27 to 1.32 in five months, which Conway Regional estimates to represent a \$260,000 increase in revenue. In addition, Conway Regional's physician query response rate is up to 86%, well above the established industry target.

**As a testament to Conway Regional's overall improvement in quality, including CDI, Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe presented Conway Regional with the Governor's Award for Performance Excellence in September 2014.**

\*\*Source : American Data Network



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From patient-to-payment,<sup>SM</sup> nThrive empowers health care for every one in every community.<sup>SM</sup>



nThrive has been a solid partner in getting a CDI program up and running again at Conway Regional, and the results speak for themselves. We now have a program in place that not only is achieving significant results now, but also has the ongoing ability to continue to track, monitor and manage our CDI program for sustainable results well into the future."

**STEVE ROSE, CHIEF FINANCIAL  
OFFICER, CONWAY REGIONAL  
HEALTH SYSTEM**

