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THE REGION'S MONTHLY HEALTHCARE NEWSPAPER

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



Terri Jacobsen

It's About the Patient

BY TERRI JACOBSEN

As a nurse and an informaticist, I believe that within our health care delivery system, the ultimate source of information must emanate from the core belief that information should follow the patient.

Much rests on our ability to exchange person-centered information across the gamut of health care. In order for our families to achieve positive health outcomes such as quality, safe and efficient care, coordination of care and the population health information needs to flow across the health care community. Potential barriers, such as technical, political, and organizational,

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REAL ESTATE, DESIGN & FACILITY PLANNING

Now is the Time for Planning

BY DEBORAH J. HODGES

There will be a lot of pent up demand once the economy returns to a more positive level. Are you thinking about facility planning and how you will manage it? It's coming. You can use this time wisely by planning your facilities now to better position yourself to capitalize on the healthier economy when it arrives and to seize a strategic advantage.

The purpose of facilities planning is to programmatically confirm what is working, what to keep, and it is a good time to define areas that are not working well. It is easy to complain or state what is not working. The successful teams ask why it is not working and find a solution to correct it. There are no quick fixes. By taking the time to plan your facility and develop a good hospital planning roadmap now, you are avoiding failures. It will also move you closer to a more robust, affordable facility.

"Taking the time now to address hospital facilities planning is important for at least three reasons, they are: 1) capturing a strategic advantage 2) identifying the right

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Deborah J. Hodges

Nursing's Role in the Changing Face of Health Care

BY NANCY T. SEMERDJIAN, RN, BSN, MBA, FACHE

Our world in health care is constantly evolving and with changes come opportunities for all of us. As the health care debate continues even after the health care reform acts, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 were signed into law in March, the emphasis on quality and cost containment will be at the forefront of all the initiatives.

With this in mind, nursing plays a significant part in both of these areas. The health care system will come to depend on nurses even more as we work collaboratively with our interdisciplinary colleagues to coordinate effective care with an emphasis on quality. We, as nurses, will need to demonstrate leadership and competence as we take on the role of champion. Studies show that early collaboration and teamwork result in quality. In other words, getting the job

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Nancy T. Semerdjian

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Professional Dynamic Network Takes HIM to the Next Level with Centralized Remote Coding Labs

BY JANET GOEKING

Coding is a crucial component of all health care systems because it drives the revenue cycle. Without it, health care providers do not get paid. While this may sound simple, the coding challenges that health care providers face are greater than ever. Retaining a well-trained coding staff has always been a struggle given the steep learning curve for new coders and the persistent shortage of trained coders. This is becoming even more difficult under widespread budget cutbacks and new coding guidelines and technologies.

Complying with the constantly changing rules and regulations is another ongoing challenge, especially as it is critical to receiving third-party reimbursements and avoiding hefty fines. Compliance requires ongoing auditing with feedback, education and training of all coding staff, which many health care facilities are increasingly unable to provide. Add to this the increasing workload that health care providers face as baby boomers age and require more medical services, and you have providers all over the country scrambling to keep up. Even facilities with full-time coding staff frequently face backlogs and end-of-month crunches due to employee turnover, absences, or decreased productivity (all of which are



often caused by a lack of adequate resources or training).

Professional Dynamic Network (PDN), a local company specializing in Health Information Management services, is now providing an innovative alternative to help health care providers meet these growing challenges. Using the latest industry-best technologies, PDN has recently opened two centralized remote coding labs and is providing coding services to health care providers both locally and nationwide. The labs connect remotely to client sites via Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and other internet servers to provide inpatient and outpatient coding, medical coding audits, and RAC DRG validation audits.

The labs receive medical record information in several formats, including electronic health records, document imaging, CD or

high speed fax. VPNs are used to ensure compliance with HIPAA standards and client expectations regarding proprietary communications and patient information. PDN has implemented highly restrictive policies to protect the confidentiality of all medical information, proprietary data, and email communications.

"We're always striving to provide our clients with high-quality, cost-effective solutions to meet their coding and HIM needs," says Gerri Smothers, President and CEO of PDN. "We saw the centralized remote coding lab concept as an innovative next-level enhancement to the traditional onsite staffing services we provide in Health Information Management. Coding is our passion, and we already have the resources in place to take the burden off health care providers. While our national database of credentialed coders is growing, our local pool of coders remains one of the largest in metropolitan Chicago. Our centralized remote coding lab has built-in features of ongoing auditing, education and training. In addition, we follow rigorous provider service requirements as well as compliance with client turnaround time and productivity standards."

Responses to service requests for the coding labs have been strong, and

Smothers has seen significant decreases in coding backlogs for our clients. By housing their coders in a centralized location, Smothers sees many benefits, such as: providing a strong system of management for support; ongoing communication with coders; timely response to coding questions; auditing; education/training; and creating a coding team culture. Given that some of PDN's coders have more than twenty-five years of experience, there is a wealth of knowledge that is shared at the labs and questions are answered easily and quickly. Coders also have access to numerous educational materials and other resources.

"Our remote coding labs leverage the latest technologies to better serve each and every client," says Smothers. "This allows health care providers to utilize the best industry practices and technologies that they may not be able to provide on their own. PDN was founded on a commitment to provide exceptional service to all of our customers. These labs allow us to continue that commitment in an industry that is rapidly changing."

PDN currently has labs in Chicago and Olympia Fields, and plans for additional locations are already underway. Coding services are available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. For more information, visit www.pdnseek.com or call (708) 747-4361.



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