Cancer Center Improves Coding Accuracy and Transforms Coding Approach

Summary

This academic cancer center is one of the world's most respected centers, focusing on cancer patient care, research, education, and prevention. The health system includes several hospital and clinic locations and has established a robust cancer network with other hospitals and health systems nationwide. They deploy single-path coding, which requires coders to have a higher skill set, deep experience, and continual training.



Challenge

- The center's need for single-path coding combined with the unique aspects of coding for cancer data and research made finding experienced and efficient coders difficult for an insourcing model.
- The cancer center began to outsource coding. They went with a "champion/challenger" model, working with three coding vendors at a time as a strategy to achieve the highest percentage of coding accuracy and productivity.
- It was challenging to provide consistent instructions and access to documentation to the multiple vendors plus internal resources.
- The center's culture played a part in the success of the vendors and internal resources, and it sought partners that could be both a culture fit and a long-term collaboration partner.

Solution

Omega Healthcare has been one of the center's coding vendors since the center began outsourcing in 2015 and helped put many systems in place to help it achieve a successful coding function.

- **Coder quality.** Omega Healthcare took the challenge and focused on improving its coder bench to fit the scope of the project and culture of the center. First, it implemented a blind communication tool with its coders that shared weekly individual productivity results across the team. Each member was assigned a new reporting identification number each week to see where they fell on team productivity rankings. This helped identify and focus coders that needed improvement and provided an unbiased way to measure and balance the team's productivity.
- **Internal audit.** Omega Healthcare maintained stringent internal quality audit processes, giving coders timely feedback and education.

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- **External audit.** In turn, Omega Healthcare conducted regular external audits of the center's internal coders, providing detailed reporting, national trends and best practices, and improvement recommendations. The audits identified opportunities to reduce both compliance risk and reimbursement risk and identified the reimbursement impact from over- and under-coded accounts. This external audit helped guide the center's education programs and provided insight to their quality team.
- **Knowledge center.** Omega Healthcare worked with the center to develop a central site on its system to house all internal documentation, training, and productivity information for all the vendors to access. It provided a one-stop location to be aware of the upcoming coding production needed for the week. This helped with scheduling resources efficiently.
- **Tech-enabled.** Omega Healthcare performed coding within the center's 3M 360 and Epic Systems and partnered with the center to balance team training needs. The team flexed their schedules around the center's staff training needs, coordinating meeting coding production requirements and attending training sessions to meet the training and production schedules.

"We value our teamwork with Omega Healthcare to improve our coding quality and function overall. It is impossible to insource coding these days completely. We rely on Omega Healthcare to provide the coding production, auditing, expertise, and collaboration that can only be gained through a mutual partnership."

VP of Coding and HIM, Academic Cancer Center

- **Data management.** The center asked Omega Healthcare to partner with them to help research and fix data issues over time. Together, they corrected problems as they were identified to optimize data management and coding quality and efficiency.
- Culture. Most importantly, the leadership at Omega Healthcare and the center established a responsive and collaborative working style that best represented the culture the center wanted to achieve.

Outcomes

- The relationship's success allowed Omega Healthcare to win ongoing RFPs and remain one of the center's selected vendors, gaining additional coders and specialized seats.
- The center perceives Omega Healthcare as their most reliable partner with best-in-class processes.
- Omega Healthcare helps the center achieve consistently high accuracy ratings. It provides timely external audit and quality feedback to the center's internal coders, sharing national trends and best practices for improvement and training.

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