University of Utah Health Care

University of Utah Health Care Improves Revenue Cycle Operations following Epic Professional Billing

The University of Utah Health Care leadership is committed to establishing best practices throughout the billing offices for their highly integrated, high-volume multi-specialty group practice. Three years after their Epic implementation, they requested an external evaluation of the Epic system design and work-flow processes. The desired outcome was to ensure that the system was being fully utilized to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
Faced with a newly reorganized business office and a robust practice management software system already in place, the University of Utah Health Care (UUHC) engaged Hayes Management Consultants (Hayes) in the evaluation of existing accounts receivable processes and system configurations focusing specifically on the root causes of changes in revenue cycle key performance indicators. The medical billing department requested guidance in reviewing processes, workflows, training plans, and comparisons with national best practices.

**Comprehensive analysis**
Along with onsite interviews and staff workflow observations, a focused review of business office operations was performed by Hayes. The information revealed shared pain points with leadership including an understanding of how to utilize analytical tools to manage and measure staff productivity.

The staff’s focus was to reduce lag times and accelerate and streamline processing cycles while taking greater ownership of business processes and outcomes. Obstacles that were identified include inefficient work queues within the Epic Resolute software queue structure and unclear accounts receivable methodologies to control and monitor the revenue cycle effectiveness.

As part of the in-depth evaluation, financial data was also analyzed and benchmarked to industry standards. This snapshot provided the current state and provided baseline data for comparison moving forward.

**Designing an optimization plan**
Once the issues were clearly defined and goals prioritized, an optimization action plan was set in motion that would impact every aspect of the revenue cycle and accounts receivable process. The new plan mitigated the weak areas of the charge capture workflow process and provided opportunities for UUHC to enhance operational performance through process improvements, end-user training, performance measurement and benchmarking, standardizing policies and procedures and increased communication.

A Revenue Cycle key performance indicators (KPI) dashboard was developed allowing leadership to interpret meaningful reporting metrics so they could better monitor financial outcomes and effectively evaluate staff productivity. The dashboard provided leadership with A/R monitoring mechanisms and served as a vehicle for detailed data analysis. Further, methodologies for productivity measurement and management were outlined including a concise escalation and corrective action plan.

Daily productivity deliverables were designated by pairing skill sets with appropriate daily tasks based on area of expertise of each staff member.
Priority levels were also outlined which communicated expectations for staff for all areas of the revenue cycle functions and denial management (including Charge Capture, Coding Completion, Pre-AR Team, AR Follow Up, Verification, Revenue Integrity, Payment Posting, Credits, Prior Authorizations, and Claim Edits).

**Workflow re-engineering**
The Epic work queue structure was reviewed, revised, and optimized which provided a more systematic approach for staff to effectively manage daily deliverables. The coding edits and rules were also updated to reflect more appropriate triage of work queue assignments. Upon consolidation, restructuring, and removing inefficient rules in the queues, step-by-step guides were delivered to end users.

To ensure transparency and consistency in the changes, training sessions were thoroughly delivered via workshops with UUHC trainers and end users alike. Ongoing refresher education classes will also be provided by UUHC training staff. The training program now includes stronger precepting and monitoring of end-user competency.

During the evaluation, coding support staff expressed dissatisfaction with the multiple workflows and inaccuracies to accommodate non-standardized charge capture processes. The optimization process standardized and consolidated the charge capture process resulting in a more efficient data entry and shorter lag times. The new workflow provides validation receipt of charges entered and, expedited the charges received and posted.

**Improved efficiency and processes**
The evaluation combined with an actionable optimization plan resulted in increased efficiency and improved processes. By leveraging technology combined with new methodologies, leadership is now able to monitor financial outcomes and staff productivity via a newly developed revenue cycle dashboard. With these metrics and further data analysis, actionable solutions were proposed which would reduce or eliminate declining performance in accounts receivable management and business office operations.

Moving forward, UUHC plans to re-evaluate processes, develop and implement more formal and standardized processes/controls and implement consistent reconciliation procedures and controls across the organization on a regular basis. Even if operations are running smoothly and outcomes are meeting or exceeding expectations, process re-evaluation on an ongoing basis is the foundation of successful business operations. This ensures maximum access to and use of all tools that support revenue cycle functions.

“The Hayes consultants were able to quickly assess our operations, develop a comprehensive optimization plan and work effectively with our team to implement it.”

Karen Wilson
Executive Director
University of Utah Health Care
About University of Utah Health Care:
University of Utah Health Care is the Intermountain West’s only academic health care system, combining excellence in patient care, the latest in medical research, and teaching to provide leading-edge medicine in a caring and personal setting. The system provides care for Utahans and residents of five surrounding states in a referral area encompassing more than 10 percent of the continental United States.

As part of that system, University Hospitals & Clinics relies on more than 1,100 board-certified physicians who staff four university hospitals (University Hospital, Huntsman Cancer Hospital, University Orthopaedic Center, and the University Neuropsychiatric Institute); 10 community clinics; and several specialty centers including the John A. Moran Eye Center, the Cardiovascular Center, the Clinical Neurosciences Center, and the Utah Diabetes Center.

About Hayes Management Consulting:
Hayes Management Consulting is a leading, national healthcare consulting firm that partners with healthcare organizations to streamline operations, improve revenue and enhance technology to drive success in an evolving healthcare landscape. To learn how Hayes Management Consulting can help you, call 617-559-0404 or contact us at requestconsultant@hayesmanagement.com.