Leveraging Epic to Enhance Your Revenue Cycle:
3 Key Areas to Focus On
A host of emerging trends continues to put stress on your revenue cycle. Some of the biggest challenges include billing and collections errors, lack of claims process monitoring and insufficient staff training.

Epic is one of the faster growing EHR vendors and their end-to-end solution is comprehensive. However, the breadth of the platform sometimes means key modules are often siloed and may not be fully integrated with other components of the solution.

Breaking down the walls and fully integrating your Epic installation can yield huge benefits when it comes to your revenue cycle. Here are three key areas of the system you can focus on to help enhance the performance of your revenue cycle.
Ensure Integrated Workqueues

Setting up the comprehensive Epic system platform is a huge undertaking. Its many modules cover a wide range of clinical areas. The set-up also entails establishing rules and processes to make the system work best for your organization. As you expand the use of the system and as your organization grows, you will no doubt add features and functionalities. There will also be updates to the software as Epic continues to add functionality to the application.

These changes will impact various components of the system that can sometimes result in problems. Epic recommends a series of workqueues during your implementation such as charger router, charge review, patient, account, claims and many others. For Epic to work effectively, rules need to be set up to make sure these various workqueues are working together. When they don’t, issues arise that can result in improper billing and extra manual intervention to ensure an effective revenue cycle.

Most problems occur in the charge review workqueue. For example, charges don’t hit appropriate workqueues due to the grouping of charge sessions. This can be caused by an incorrect rule written involving charge sources. Epic delivers certain standard rules but it provides a flexible, property tree of every item in a charge line into which you can bring a charge. You can create your own rules but sometimes this can result in charge sessions going to incorrect buckets or workqueues. For example, five lines on one charge session can be split with one line going to an incorrect workqueue and the other four going to the correct workqueue. If the rule had been written properly, all five lines would have stayed together and the claim would be clean.

An optimal Epic workflow requires integration throughout the entire process: provider sends documentation, charges flow through the appropriate workqueues, claims goes out the door properly, remits comes back in full, users work the denials and finally, payments are made by the patient. Each workqueue needs to be set up optimally so the users can use it most efficiently. You need to focus on correct rule writing based on a thorough understanding of the workqueue properties.

To make sure this happens, clear communication with the IT team, better testing scenarios and realistic testing environments should be used. Testing should take place after any changes – new or amended rules, special updates or a new release. The testing should also involve real workflow scenarios from the operational side.

Unfortunately testing is often done in siloes – only in the single module in which a change has been made - without crossing into other modules that may be affected. It’s critical to consider the big picture and conduct integrated testing when making changes.
Optimize Rules

Appropriately written rules are the key to effective workflows and a streamlined revenue cycle process. You should constantly be evaluating your rules to ensure they are driving the results you want. In most cases this involves looking to make sure claims are hitting the right workqueues throughout the process.

To do this, review reports of groups of claims and charges to see where they are flowing through the system. Providers can change their process or begin using different clinics without notice. Payers can change their rules and edits in their systems again without notifying you. If you don’t pay attention, your rules will be out of date and issues will arise in your process.

Rather than relying on reports only, some organizations use dashboards for the claims team to carefully watch for trends or changes. This continuous monitoring allows them to investigate changes and quickly request edits to their rules to avoid workflow interruption. Staying on top of your rules is an important way to ensure revenue cycle integrity.
Ongoing review of your key performance indicators (KPIs) is a critical aspect to ensuring an effective revenue cycle process. Epic sets up your KPIs and runs your actual results in the background making tracking your performance simple. It also allows you to take advantage of their Financial Pulse feature to compare your performance to other Epic users. You can specify the type of organization you want to benchmark – pediatrics or academic for example – to ensure your comparisons are against truly like organizations.

Conducting this analysis works well if you are running an Epic suite exclusively. Unfortunately, many organizations don’t have that luxury and instead must operate in an IT environment using multiple systems and solutions. For example, you may be running your physician billing in Epic and your hospital billing in GE with financials coming out of both systems.

If you have dual systems, you need a tool that can draw in and consolidate your data from your disparate systems to enable in-depth analysis. The appropriate tool will enable you to conduct continuous monitoring and provide alerts for key indicators to help you identify missed revenue generating opportunities or potential leakage in your revenue cycle.

Whether operating in an exclusive Epic system or in a multiple system environment, you will want the ability to drill into your data for further investigation to get to root cause of any issues. The goal then becomes correcting those root causes instead of simply fixing problem transactions.

Epic provides a wide array of tools and features to help you optimize your revenue cycle. It’s up to you to use in-house staff or third party resources to help you take the most advantage of them.
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