Case study: Hays Medical Center
Hays, Kansas

Proven results

After a year of success using 3M's computer-assisted coding (CAC) technology, Hays signed on to be the first beta site for the 3M™ 360 Encompass™ System, going live in December 2011. Farthing says the process has been smooth. Taking on the responsibilities of being a beta site isn’t something she’d be willing to do with every company. “With 3M it wasn’t an issue because we worked together. They listened to our pain points and always asked for our suggestions for improvement.”

With the 3M 360 Encompass System, Hays has seen:

- 45 percent increase in inpatient coder productivity
- 20 percent increase in outpatient coder productivity
- Increased coder and CDI staff satisfaction

“The reality is that in the new ICD-10 environment, you can either work harder or work smarter. We chose the second option.”

—Deloris Farthing, RHIA, CHDA, director, Health Information Management, Hays Medical Center

Snapshot of Hays Medical Center

Formed in 1991 through the merger of two religiously affiliated facilities, Hays Medical Center is a private, nonprofit 228-bed facility in northwestern Kansas. Supporting the largest number of critical access hospitals in the country and the only hospital in its region to provide tertiary level services, Hays serves a population of over 130,000 citizens.

The challenge

As changing regulations exert new demands on healthcare providers, rural hospitals and clinics, with limited staff and fewer resources, must find new and innovative ways to prepare for regulatory mandates.

Hays Medical Center exemplifies this kind of innovation. A health system on the front lines of technology adoption, Hays began transitioning its records to an electronic health record (EHR) system in 2004, well ahead of many other facilities. Today, about 95 percent of Hays’ records exist as discrete data within its EHR, enabling better access to patient information for caregivers across its multi-county region.

The advent of ICD-10 and the growing volume of data in the EHR had the potential to impact coding speed, documentation accuracy and timely billing. Deloris Farthing, the hospital’s health information management (HIM) director, realized her department needed to streamline coding and clinical documentation improvement (CDI) processes to head off the expected ICD-10 productivity impact. “The reality is that in the new ICD-10 environment, you can either work harder or work smarter. We chose the second option.”

The approach

Ten years earlier, Hays Medical Center had instituted a CDI program, but even with this solid foundation, Farthing felt they had to do more to prepare staff and physicians for ICD-10 coding and documentation requirements. She also saw the potential for better communication between her team of hospital-based CDI specialists and seven remote coders. The organization decided to seek an
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automated solution that would assist the coding process and enhance the CDI processes. “We wanted an application that could do more than simple code suggestion,” Farthing said. “We felt the time had come to bridge the gap that separated coding from clinical documentation.” With its CAC technology fully integrated with CDI, the 3M™ 360 Encompass™ System provided that bridge.

Now that Hays Medical Center’s coders and CDI specialists operate within a single workflow, “the CDI staff is able to hone in on pertinent words and spot missing documentation,” Farthing notes. Collaboration across HIM functions has improved and many duplicated tasks have been eliminated. Physician queries initiated by the CDI team are not repeated by coders since the system enables auto-tracking of queries and responses.

Working from the same content makes it easy for CDI specialists to identify the working DRG earlier in a patient’s stay, while coders can quickly alert the CDI team when they spot evidence in the documentation that may have been overlooked—all while the patient is still in-house. “The system also includes many reference materials—everything from coding books and medical dictionaries to the MS-DRGs definitions manual. The CDI staff loves that,” says Farthing. “Before we implemented 360 Encompass, the CDI staff used to haul coding reference books around with them from floor to floor.”

On the coding side, Farthing initially had to deal with anxiety from veteran coders who were concerned that an auto-coding solution would jeopardize their jobs. But this, Farthing stressed, was not the case at all. “Computer-assisted coding isn’t meant to replace coders but rather to enhance their performance. Human coders are still needed to make the important coding decisions—the technology just makes it easier for them to do it.”

Once implemented, coders soon warmed to the benefits of CAC. “One feature of 360 Encompass that coders have really enjoyed is being able to code patient records in ICD-10 and then analyze which codes will require more documentation in the new coding system,” says Farthing. “Using this data, we have been able to identify areas where we need to change or improve our documentation.”

The results

With the 3M 360 Encompass System, Hays Medical Center has realized a 45 percent increase in inpatient coder productivity and a 20 percent increase in outpatient coder productivity. Staff members who shied away from the automation changes now embrace the benefits: Since implementing 3M 360 Encompass, Hays has also seen a marked increase in coder and CDI staff satisfaction.

Working with 3M

For Deloris Farthing, HIM director at Hays Medical Center, the “who” was equally as important as the “what” in choosing an integrated computer-assisted coding and clinical documentation improvement solution. More than simply acquiring new software, Hays wanted a vendor they could count on.

Having previous experience with 3M, Farthing says, was an important factor in their software selection. “Our coders have used 3M coding software since 2002 and 3M’s DRG Assurance program has helped us keep our documentation on track since 1998. Once we heard that 3M had released an inpatient computer-assisted coding program, we didn’t even look at any other vendors.”

True to its reputation for leading innovation, Hays has risen to the challenges presented by its rural environment and emerged successful. Hays Medical Center is well on its way to achieving ICD-10 readiness. “3M’s 360 Encompass System was the right decision,” says Farthing. “Our documentation and queries are better, and our coders more efficient, productive and accurate. We’re in a better place than we were before.”

Call today

For more information on how 3M solutions can assist your organization, contact your 3M sales representative, call us toll-free at 800-367-2447, or visit us online at www.3Mhis.com.