

Case study: Creating a one touch process at Southcoast Health



Snapshot of Southcoast Health System

3M technology used by Southcoast Health:

360™ Encompass™ Audit Expert System – Inpatient Prebill Review

Southcoast Health System is a not-for-profit community-based health delivery system with multiple access points, offering an integrated continuum of health services throughout Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Today, Southcoast Health provides advanced clinical services such as open heart surgery, angioplasty and heart rhythm services, comprehensive cancer care, neurosurgery, weight loss surgery, orthopedic surgery, advanced imaging services and is the only provider of maternity services in the region.

The challenge

Prior to working with 3M, Southcoast Health created a system to help with coding errors. This process utilized a third party vendor to identify potential coding errors (via flags) at the end of the coding session. The system then required a review process to determine if flagged errors should be sent to coding to correct or released for billing without review.

The process was time consuming and cumbersome. With a range of 50 – 100 flagged encounters, the dedicated reviewer at Southcoast Health was under a lot of pressure to quickly review encounters and maintain a targeted release time for bill submission. This process left the organization vulnerable to delayed claim submissions, or errors leading to potential over coding, under coding, or worse case, denials.

Looking for a solution, the Southcoast Health team identified the following goals to improve their process:

- Identify and introduce a one-touch process, allowing coders to address coding issues at the point of coding
- Reduce coding session holds and decrease AR days
- Increase coding accuracy beyond the national standards
- Decrease denials based on inaccurate code sets
- Ensure data quality by identifying clinical trial encounters and assigning the correct performing provider

The solution

In 2020, The Southcoast Health team introduced **360™ Encompass™ Audit Expert System – Inpatient Prebill Review** to enhance their process and meet organizational goals. This 3M solution enables customized, actionable edits at the point of coding and integrates a second level review process as needed. The coding staff could now receive additional prompts, triggering them to ensure the code was specific and accurate. Additionally, the custom edit process includes a hard stop, must resolve, and other awareness levels depending on the criticality of the edit. This can help with edit fatigue often experienced during coding sessions.

An additional area of risk within the process was unexpected absences or time off. Because there is only one person to manage the reviews at Southcoast Health, the only option for the organization was to release all encounters when the reviewer was unavailable. By adding the edits at the point of coding, and placing the responsibility for accuracy on the coders, the organization eliminated this challenge, even with limited staff.

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Getting started

3M Inpatient Prebill Review provides unlimited opportunities to build edits, so knowing where to start took some planning and analysis. The Southcoast Health team ultimately began by reviewing their existing edits to determine what could be addressed at the front end of the process, looking at the following criteria:

- What flagged encounters were they already seeing on the backend?
- What was the quality team returning?
- What was the impact to:
 - o Revenue
 - o Quality measures that would lead to penalties
- What edits were already firing that could be addressed at the point of coding versus holding for a day or two?

To avoid edit fatigue, Southcoast Health started with a small number of edits (seven) and have gradually added more to the list.

Examples of Southcoast Health custom edits include:



Example 1 – Missing National Institute of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) scores

NIHSS scores are a required component of the quality measures for strokes. Adding a custom edit reminds the coder to assign the NIHSS score during the coding session.



Example 2 – Including a Body Mass Index (BMI) edit

BMI was a consistent area of risk for Southcoast Health. Using the new 3M Inpatient Prebill Review process, the Southcoast Health team identified 48 potential issues, of which 47 were resolved at the point of coding.



Example 3 – Identified codes for clinical trials

Clinical trials require very specific codes for billing, which can easily be overlooked in the coding workflow. These missed codes can be identified by a claim edit check within the electronic health record (EHR), but this can delay billing by 1-2 days. Using custom edits from 3M Inpatient Prebill Review, Southcoast Health has added additional prompts at the point of coding, eliminating the claim edit checks associated with these coding encounters.

The 3M advantage

Integrated, actionable edits at the point of coding

Integrated within the 3M™ 360 Encompass™ System workflow, 3M Inpatient Prebill Review gives coders the means to resolve potential issues early on at the point of coding, keeping small issues from becoming large ones.

3M Inpatient Prebill Review's actionable edits address coding pain points that align with an organization's coding policies and procedures. These edits provide coders with guidance and education at the point of coding. Actionable edits used during a coding session are also recorded for tracking, trending, routing and reporting purposes.

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Second level reviews

The 3M Inpatient Prebill Review workflow supports edit-driven second level reviews, or additional reviews as specified. Integrated within the 3M 360 Encompass system, 3M Inpatient Prebill Review includes:



Communication tools for reviewers and coders



Visual indicator of suggested changes



Information tracked for further reporting

The results

With 3M Inpatient Prebill Review, Southcoast Health created a new standard for coding, reviews and compliance, resulting in:



Increased accuracy scores. Coding accuracy scores increased by 2 percent in 1 month



Revamped denial prevention process to address coding issues at the front end.
Clean claims went from 83 percent to 86 percent



Integrated one-touch process to streamline coding and reviews

Beyond the results

Aside from improving accuracy and overall outcomes, 3M Inpatient Prebill Review empowered Southcoast Health to resolve potential issues early on before they became costly corrections. The system also enables strategic reporting and tracking of risk areas. With 3M as a partner, Southcoast Health is positioned to navigate the challenges ahead with confidence and continue doing what they do best, providing exceptional patient care.



Call today.

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

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