Coding, Auditing, and Education Services Provide Coding Coverage at TJUH

Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals

BACKGROUND

Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals (TJUH) are dedicated to excellence in patient care, patient safety, and the quality of the healthcare experience. US News and World Report ranks them as one of the nation’s top medical centers in 11 specialties. TJUH takes pride in educating the health professionals of tomorrow and discovering new knowledge to define the future of clinical care. Within the health information management (HIM) department, clinical coding staffing levels were a major revenue cycle concern. Industry and regulatory changes directly added to HIM workload and reduced productivity, further complicating the coder shortage. Other HIM processes such as clinical documentation improvement (CDI) and clinical abstracting (Core Measures) were also in need of credentialed resources. These needs were occurring at the same time TJUH was experiencing growth in patient numbers.

CHALLENGES

Taking advantage of a new 3M document management system, HIM leadership decided to combine coding teams. Coders from the three hospitals and outpatient areas were centralized into a single

CASE STUDY

At a Glance

Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital provides excellent clinical and compassionate care in the Philadelphia region.

- 3 hospitals: 937 licensed beds
- 42,928 admissions per year
- 119,068 emergency visits per year
- 494,722 outpatient visits per year

Challenge

Centralizing coding operations to a single HIM department

Solution Results

- Provide coding and CDI resources
- Maintain DNFB at target levels
- Improve coding accuracy through reviews and audits
- Provide customized coding education curriculum
HIM department. The goal: increase productivity and stabilize coding resource requirements.

According to Dina Nedorost, RHIT, CCS, AHIMA ICD-10 Approved Trainer, and Director of Coding & Data Operations, HIM Department, at the time of consolidation there was more work than TJUH coders could manage. Because qualified, credentialed coders were in short supply, there was an overwhelming need for supplemental resources. Furthermore, TJUH was faced with significant week-to-week fluctuations in coding needs.

Despite these challenges, HIM remained committed to maintaining high quality standards within the work produced. To achieve this goal, an elite team of coders and coding managers from Ciox were assigned to code records as well as conduct continuous quality review and coding audits. In addition, HIM felt strongly about the importance of continuing education for its coders. Realizing that educational resources have unique skill sets, TJUH again looked to Ciox to fulfill training needs.

**SOLUTION**

**Ciox coding and education services**

“Having used Ciox for the past 12 years in various capacities, it was easy to look to them for help with the current issues, and future ones as well,” mentions Nedorost. “We chose to adapt coding workflow to produce weekly schedules of HIM resources required from Ciox,” she adds. TJUH sends a weekly email to Ciox stating their needs, usually 180 hours per week for coding and another 80 hours for quality review/audit. In the event that additional hours are needed, Ciox is prepared to accommodate.

“The Ciox coding and quality staff is very productive and extremely professional,” adds Nedorost. “Ciox resources are treated just like the in-house employees. They are included in all we do.”

Results of centralization efforts provided achievement of three important objectives.

- **Coder Cross-Training** – Ciox consultants were involved in coding records from all the entities and, as a result, they became cross-trained as part of the centralization initiative.
- **More Consistent Coding** – The Ciox team implemented best practice workflows to ensure consistency across the organization; in fact, TJUH coding management continues to consult with Ciox for best practice advice and continuing education.
- **Keeping DNFB on Track** – Ciox helps ensure TJUH’s DNFB targets are met, supporting TJUH with “weekend blitzes” to ensure coverage at key times.

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“Ciox’s collaborative approach to auditing and quality monitoring provides consistent operational and financial benefits to our organization.”

**NANCY RHODES, VP REVENUE CYCLE**

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