



Simplify and Improve Your Up-Front Collections

Tips for generating more revenue and easing the self-pay burden



By Christine Wagner

Patients are carrying more and more of the fiscal burden for delivery of care every day. Self-pay patients can be a source of financial pain for many providers because they are more likely to generate a write-off that results in lost revenue. Making sure your staff knows how to considerately collect money before the delivery of care is a key way to generate more revenue and make it clear to the patient what their financial responsibilities are after they leave your office.

- **Make your patient registration as accurate as possible**, because it's your best chance to maintain contact with the patient throughout the process. Many write-offs occur because of inaccurate information during this stage. Automated solutions such as Emdeon Assistant can check and verify key information to ensure accuracy and eliminate painful errors.
- **Utilize electronic eligibility and benefits verification** to create an accurate accounting of what the patient will have to pay after a third party or payer contributions. An automated solution can integrate this into your daily patient registration to give your staff the most information possible.
- **Be timely and accurate with your billing** and make sure your up-front costs are as clear as possible to the patient. When a patient is confused about what they are actually paying for it can create mistrust. Make sure your billing documents are detailed, but still as readable as possible to people with no medical training.

- **Work with your staff** to make sure they can politely and competently explain the benefits of paying for care up-front, rather than after the fact. They should remain polite and not make the patient feel uncomfortable when discussing their financial responsibilities.
- **Have a clear, consistent payment policy** that you give to the patient before the delivery of care. It should define the terms and payment schedule expected from the patient. This eliminates confusion for any financial responsibility they may carry after any procedure.
- **Reduce staff turnover** so that you are not constantly training new registration personnel. Mistakes made in the initial process are a primary cause for future billing and payment problems.

These tips will help you and your staff collect payments up-front and ensure you have the most accurate information available to reduce the chance that you have to write-off revenue. By preventing financial losses and ensuring accuracy from the beginning you can save time and money across your entire revenue cycle and simplify your work on multiple levels.

Christine Wagner is an active member of the GA Chapter of HFMA and currently serves as a Registration Team member, board member of the Georgia Chapter of AAHAM and participates with the GHA UB04 committee. Christine is the Emdeon Account Executive for GA. To find out more, contact us today at 877.EMDEON.6 (877.363.3666) or visit us online at www.emdeon.com/solutions.

Save the Date...

Georgia Society of CPA's 2010 Healthcare Conference

(Co-sponsored by the Georgia Chapter of the Healthcare Financial Management Association)

Thursday, February 25, 2010

Cobb Galleria Centre • Two Galleria Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30339

www.gscpa.org

This conference is a must-attend event for financial professionals who work with healthcare providers. This year's agenda features general sessions of interest to all healthcare financial professionals and concurrent sessions on more specific issues of interest. There are topics of interest for those working with physicians, hospitals, and other providers.