

MedStar Health Performance Improvement & Analytics Case Study

Overview

As part of enterprise efforts to improve provider documentation accuracy, leadership identified opportunities to better understand provider response patterns to documentation queries sent by coding and CDI teams. Documentation clarification queries are used by coding and CDI teams to clarify ambiguous, conflicting, imprecise, incomplete, or inconsistent documentation within the medical record in support of accurate code assignment and appropriate representation of the patient's clinical picture, severity of illness, and risk of mortality, as well as compliant and accurate billing.

The Challenge

- Key insights related to provider query response timing were housed within a vendor platform not broadly accessible across teams
- Addressing the issue required coordination across multiple clinical, operational, and analytics stakeholders

The Approach

A multidisciplinary group representing CDI, Coding Operations, Coding Quality, Clinical Quality & Safety, Critical Care, Hospital Medicine, Compliance, and Enterprise Analytics collaborated to review opportunities related to delayed provider query responses. In some cases, queries were closing before clarification could be obtained, contributing to incomplete documentation.

The group focused on increasing appropriate visibility into response trends while supporting shared understanding of existing processes and workflows. Through this collaboration, the teams aligned on a solution that would provide enterprise-level insight to support ongoing dialogue, education, and process improvement related to documentation practices.

The Results

A dashboard was developed to provide high-level visibility into provider query response patterns. The dashboard is refreshed monthly and supports ongoing monitoring and iterative refinement by participating teams.

Early insights highlighted opportunities such as outdated provider contact information and the need for clearer guidance around responding to queries when follow-up questions arise. Additional enhancements, including further automation, have been identified as future opportunities.

Key Takeaways

- Cross-functional collaboration was critical to addressing an enterprise-wide documentation challenge
- Increased transparency supported shared understanding across teams without changing existing governance structures
- While there was an imminent need to address the issue, the solution was intentionally designed to be iterative, recognizing that as processes evolve, additional opportunities requiring awareness will emerge, and the team will have data available to develop new views while continuing to monitor existing ones to ensure performance remains consistent following updates

