Money Matters

Improve Your Practice’s Bottom Line With 12 Easy-to-Implement Strategies

The bonus: You’ll help meet your patients’ changing payment needs, too.

Every dollar counts in your practice and finding ways to improve your billing and collections — and subsequently your practice’s bottom line — is crucial. Finding new, innovative ways to meet your patients’ billing/payment needs and embracing new technologies will ensure your practice getting every dollar it deserves.

“With patients assuming a greater percentage responsibility for their medical bills, there has never been a more important time for practices to evaluate the methods they use to process and collect payments,” says Scott McCollum, president of BillingTree in Livingston, N.J., can help increase your patient collection success.

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Ensure Patients Know You Mean Business With This Final Collections Letter

Informing patients of non-payment consequences is key.

Practices across the country are finding that more and more patients are unable, or unwilling, to pay their bills. That means you need to step up your collections efforts if you’re going to collect from your patients who have outstanding balances.

You need to ensure your collection policies are written down and that you inform your patients of the steps your practice will take if they do not pay their bills. Using a final collections letter like this one from Ivonne Atanacio, certified billing and coding specialist for Sports Medicine Orthopedics Center in Livingston, N.J., can help increase your patient collection success.

This letter is the final collections letter “our office uses to make sure that we are 100 percent covered in the event we need to send the account to collections,” Atanacio says. “Patients in our office are very well informed of the consequences if they decided to ignore and not pay the balances owed on their accounts.”

Date ___________

Dear ___________,

Our office has made several attempts in contacting you via mail and phone however; we have not received a response back from you.

Our records indicate that there is an outstanding balance due on your account for services rendered (dates) your account balances in the amount of $_______.

According to our records we have not received either a reply to our letter or a remittance to clear this account.

We extended credit to you on your account in good faith and expected payment under our normal thirty day terms which we feel are most reasonable. We also offered a payment plan arrangement in which you did not respond.

Your lack of response has shown little interest in resolving the balance owed on your account

If we do not here from you within 5 business days your account will be forwarded to a collection agency and additional fees as described in the agreement signed will apply as well.

Sincerely,

Account receivables □

Specialty specific codesets, tools and content on one page in SuperCoder.com. Call 1-866-228-9252 now for a super deal!
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Phoenix, Ariz. “We’ve found that many practices still only having the ability to collect payment at the time of service.”

Start with These 12 Ideas

Take a look at this rundown of 12 ideas from McCollum that may help your practice improve customer service and improve the bottom line. Then, implement the ones that work in your practice and watch your A/R improve.

“We believe that all practices should consider adopting at least one of these 12 payment and billing ideas this year,” McCollum explains. “Each one enables them to tighten control of their DSO [days sales outstanding] while offering patients more convenient ways of paying their bills — such as PURLs [personal URLs] and text payments — so as to encourage patients to pay on time, so that they can quickly realize real benefits to their bottom line.

1. Convenience Fees: Consider either a ‘No Fee to Biller’ model using pre-set flat convenience fees collected by your processor to retain 100 percent of your billable amounts, or a ‘Biller Keeps the Fee’ model to create a new revenue stream and forecast the positive impact to your bottom line.

2. Account Verification: Verify the accuracy of the customer’s account information and likeliness of successful pay before establishing recurring payment plans to avoid costly and time consuming setups or repeated returned payments.

3. Virtual Agents: Let computer-based algorithms handle payment options on qualifying account balances leaving agents and customer service reps free for other tasks.

4. ACH: Accept payments via ACH and reduce your processing fees while increasing customer satisfaction through providing more efficient cash management capabilities compared to traditional paper payments.

5. Cash Payments: Help your underbanked customers make payments and settle debts by accepting electronic cash payments — plus eliminate the risk of managing cash at your locations.

6. E-Billing (EBPP): Reduce paper and postage costs by introducing e-billing and payment processing so customers can see their bills and pay online while also reducing your Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) and operational costs.

7. Text payments: Customers like this emerging technology. It provides a convenient option for busy mobile-savvy people; they can receive bill reminders and authorize payment by text message.

8. PURLs for Personalized Payments: One-time-use personalized URLs encourage electronic payments from paper statements and invoices, so customers can quickly pay online while eliminating the need to create a profile or log into a public online payment portal.

9. Check 21: Exchanging electronic images of checks means faster access to check payments and greater efficiency than physically transporting paper checks. Check 21 enables non-standard paper checks such as business checks to be converted to electronic images for processing.

10. Web Payment Forms and IVR: By providing a company branded web payment form or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone line for customers and debtors to self pay, the process of collecting on outstanding balances can be streamlined even further while offering 24 x 7 access.

11. Debit Cards Only: Consider the option of limiting payment card acceptance to validated debit cards only, effective for portfolios where access to credit is minimal or restricted.

12. Text Notifications: Bill and communicate with customers and debtors via SMS text for a quick, easy to set up, and low cost service outage notices or as a past due payment reminder service.”

Reader Questions

G8644 Applies For ‘No License’ Exceptions

Question:
Is G8644 used when a provider doesn’t have authority under federal law to write a prescription? Or does it indicate the eligible provider didn’t have e-prescribing technology to submit an e-rx?

Washington Subscriber

Answer:
You should use G8644 (Eligible provider does not have prescribing privileges) for a physician or non-physician provider who would otherwise be required to participate in the ePrescribe program but the provider does not have prescribing privileges (such as no license to prescribe). The one-time reporting of code G8644 was required in 2011 for the provider to be granted an exception.

According to CMS’s 2011 Electronic Prescribing (eRx) Incentive Program Update CMS has this to say about G8633: “there will be a G8644 code which can be used by eligible professionals to indicate that they do not have prescribing privileges.” You can read the entire document online at www.cms.gov/ERxIncentive/Downloads/2011eRxIncentiveProgramUpdatefor2012PaymentAdjustment05-09-11.pdf.

Save Initial NF Visit Billing for the Physician

Question:
I am receiving denial C0-170 (Payment is denied when performed/billed by this type of provider) from Medicare when I bill for an initial nursing facility visit our physician assistant (PA) did. I am using place of service code 31 (Skilled Nursing Facility) and provider type 38 (Physician assistant). Why am I getting this denial?

Wyoming Subscriber

Answer:
You cannot bill an initial visit in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) or nursing facility (NF) using 99304-99306 (Initial nursing