Managing Your Practice Management and Billing Software

Written by [medmonthly](#) on September 1, 2017 in [Features](#)

The world of healthcare is going digital, whether we are ready or not. Electronic health records (EHR) are quickly becoming the industry standard, driven by hefty financial incentives and the promise of greater efficiency. Four in five practices have made the leap to digital records, with many implementing adjunct billing and practice management software. Unfortunately, the transition has not been an easy one for many doctors and dentists.

The right software, well-implemented, can have benefits including greater efficiency, decreased operating costs, and improved productivity. However, more than 40 percent of practices are experiencing the exact opposite, according to a report by AmericanEHR. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed said that their systems make workload reduction difficult or very difficult.

You can avoid or resolve most of these common problems by choosing the right software, and implementing it efficiently.

Choosing the right EHR

The digital transition is not easy on your practice, or your budget. The cost for a large, multi-clinician practice easily exceeds $150 thousand, and implementation can take more than a year. Understandably, many doctors and dentists try to reduce the time, expense, and labor involved.

One of the most common mistakes is purchasing an inadequate system in an effort to lower costs. Unfortunately, that approach only leads to underperformance, frustration, and greater costs in the long term. When looking for ways to trim your budget, don't "cut corners" in these important areas:

- **Features –**Analyze your workflow and talk to your staff. Think about how the software will be used, what might simplify the process, and what would save time. Choose a system that has the power to meet your practice's needs.

- **Integration** – EHR systems range from standalone applications to components in complete practice management suites. Even if you don't plan to digitize every aspect of your office right away, give yourself the flexibility to do so. Look for an all-in-one system, or a billing friendly EHR that is compatible with other essential programs.

- **Hardware** – No matter how good your software is, it will not deliver maximum performance on sub-par machines. Additionally, a slow computer will reduce staff efficiency. When purchasing or upgrading servers, workstations, and other hardware, invest in quality.

- **Budgeting for extras** – No matter how carefully you plan, there will likely be several thousand dollars of unexpected expenses. Some of the most common include hardware upgrades, subscription services, technical support, and additional labor. Avoid glitches by preparing for these expenses.

MANAGING MEDICAL BILLING

MEDICAL INSURANCE BILLING

HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT, OR MORE COMPLICATED.

You can streamline this cumbersome process, and improve your bottom line, with training, implementation of effective processes, and making use of technology.

TOP THREE AVOIDABLE CAUSES OF CLAIM DENIALS

Demographic and technical errors cause about two-thirds of all initial medical claim denials. Is your staff making these common mistakes?

1

MISSING INFORMATION

Make sure your clinical team provides all information needed, and that your billing team double-checks entries before finalizing a claim.

2

CODING ERRORS

If the code is not correct, or not specific enough, the claim may be denied. It is important to have detailed documentation and convenient "CHEAT SHEETS" available to the billing team.

3

HANDWRITTEN CLAIMS

While some practices prefer handwriting claims, it can cause problems if employees have poor penmanship. Everything written should be clear and legible.

WHY GO DIGITAL

If your practice has transitioned to **EHR (Electronic Health Records)**, the next logical step is electronic medical billing. Here are five good reasons to put down the pen and paper.

1 Process bills more quickly and efficiently

2 Lower claim submission costs up to 55 percent

3 Reduce paperwork (and therefore office clutter)

4 Improve accuracy

5 Easily access patient information

DO YOU KNOW?

Doctors and staff alike struggle with administrative and billing challenges, often due to lack of training or basic knowledge of the system.

- Less than **one quarter** of doctors are prepared for **MACRA** (Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015)

- About **four in ten** doctors have not provided staff training on **HCCs (Hierarchical Condition Categories)**

- Over **60 percent** of physicians and medical interns say that administrative issues are their **greatest professional challenges**

- **Most people** who use EHR software **do not utilize all capabilities**, or even know what features their systems have

Ekwa Marketing
http://www.ekwa.com

EKWA MARKETING

Implementing electronic medical billing

Capterra surveyed hundreds of physicians, nurses, administrators, and others who use EHR systems for their EHR industry report. Participants were asked what features they most wished their systems included. Among physicians, the least requested feature was medical billing and claims processing.

While it may not be high on your priority list, automated billing probably has more potential to impact your practice's revenue than any other feature. The implementation process is cumbersome, but once completed it can save time and reduce the cost of claim submissions by more than 50 percent.

Follow these steps to ease the transition and make the most of your medical billing software:

- **Technical support.**

When something goes wrong with your billing system, you need it fixed ASAP. Few IT professionals have experience with these complex systems, so it can be challenging to find a highly skilled expert in a hurry. Find a reliable service, or hire an adequately qualified technician to maintain your software.

- **Invest in training for all team members who will use the system.**

Perhaps the most interesting takeaway from the above mentioned EHR industry report was that most respondents did not know all of the features their systems had. This included features on their "wish lists." With good software, your team will have valuable, time-saving tools at their fingertips – but without training those tools may go unused.

- **Establish consistent in-office procedures.**

A detailed and well documented billing policy will help prevent errors and inconsistencies. The process should include double-checking and cross-referencing before submitting a claim, deadlines to follow up on rejected claims, and procedures for responding to non-paying patients.

- **Provide documentation.**

Make sure employees have access to policy manuals, software user guides, "cheat sheets" of commonly used insurance codes, and other useful reference materials.

- **Hire a service or budget plenty of employee hours for data entry.**

This is probably the most tedious and time-consuming aspect of implementing your system, but it is essential. Electronic billing allows your team and your patients to access account history easily. However, all of the old data must be entered in the system first.

Next steps

Implementing a new billing system is not a once-and-done activity. Despite your best efforts, there will most likely be some glitches. Monitor the rate of claim rejections, average payment time, billing-related client complaints, and number of overdue payments. If you notice any of these financial metrics declining, review the system to find out why. Also encourage feedback from your team.

Once your EHR and electronic billing systems are in place and operating smoothly, it's time to consider taking your technology to the next level. Integrated patient portals, online appointment scheduling, electronic forms, and mobile apps are excellent additions for office efficiency and improved patient experience.

Conclusion

Digitizing and automating your office may seem like a daunting undertaking, but you will be richly rewarded in revenue, office efficiency, and patient satisfaction. As an added bonus, your willingness to embrace technology will help cultivate a progressive, modern brand image.

About the Author:
Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists and physicians. With a team of 140+ full time marketers, www.ekwa.com helps doctors who know where they want to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.