

Pamela: Hi, this is Pamela Moore, Director of Content and Strategy for Physicians Practice. With me is Agnes Radz. Agnes is CEO of Ascend Billing Services in Littleton, Colorado and she's going to share with us some insights on how she turned around AR for the 68 physicians she worked with. Now, Agnes, tell me a little bit more about what the billing service looked like when you joined.

Agnes: When I first got to Ascend Billing Services in May 2006, the biggest problem that we had was with outstanding AR as well as not having anywhere to verify that our claims were actually reaching the payers. What would happen is we would actually send out claims and the only thing that we would receive back was a fax and that would be after a couple days stating which claims were being rejected, but still nothing that would confirm what claims would actually reach the payers.

Pamela: That makes it hard to follow up.

Agnes: Yes, it does. It makes it very difficult. And at that point we knew that that was our biggest problem and we needed to look for a solution and that is when we joined forces with Navicure.

Navicure has given us the ability to do every single claim that is transmitted through the Navicure clearinghouse; we get a report the next day stating that every single claim has reached the payer. And how that helps us, is when our AR reps are statusing claims and calling insurance carriers, AR basically avoids the whole process of being told that the claim has never reached us. Different carriers will have different reasons, but the number one reason they didn't pay our claims is, as they would say-- the claim never reached them. So what we do now is we go on to the Navicure system, we pull up a report, we find our particular claim, we print it and fax it over to them which has eliminated a tremendous amount of calls. And what has happened is our claims are getting paid a lot quicker and we're not spending tons of time on the phone trying to track them down.

Pamela: I guess you also don't have to wait, you know, thirty days to find out that the claim was never received by the payer You can find out right away if there's a problem.

Agnes: That is correct. What is happening a lot with this economy nowadays is patients will come through

and they will give insurance information that is no longer active, so what happens right now is the moment we enter the claim, the next day we receive a rejection stating that the patient no longer has that particular insurance and we are able to turn around and within two days have a statement sent to the patient.

Pamela: Boy, that makes it a lot faster. Great. So -- and I think that all this, you were telling me earlier, has really impacted your workflow and the efficiency at which your billers can work the claims.

Agnes: That is correct. What we've been able to do, which I think is a great success for us, is when we first started we were billing for 50 physicians. We currently bill for 68 physicians and we have not increased our staff at all.

Pamela: Wow.

Agnes: So there was no need for additional staff and also what we've been able to do is shift a lot of the resources towards self-pay, and again, with this economy,

that is where the biggest growth has occurred is in the self-pay.

Pamela: So instead of focusing just on payers, some of your folks can focus more on those patient accounts.

Agnes: That is correct.

Pamela: And there time really is of the essence. You have to know right away, as you were saying, if that patient is on an expired insurance card or before they move or disappear altogether.

Agnes: That is correct. With our self-pay patients what we've noticed is our biggest problem is bad addresses. We've been able to capture a lot more revenue just by simply working our bad address. And the process that we have at Ascend billing, our number one step, is we simply communicate with the patient, we give them a follow-up call and we kind of treat it like a courtesy call and we thank them for coming to our facility and we ask them if they truly have no insurance. Then the second step that we take is we utilize the carrier's website and try to locate and make sure that they truly do not have insurance

information. And then our third step is we utilize a bad address system where we put in the social security number and it comes back with the most accurate address. And we've also noticed that a lot of the times it's not necessarily that the whole address is wrong or that the patient gave us the wrong address; it is just human error. We have avenue versus road and we have one digit off or a wrong zip code, and you know, with one tiny mistake like that you have a claim that's not going to get paid.

Pamela: Interesting. So you shift from the services that the billing company was previously using to the Navicare services. It sounds like some of the really big benefits for you have been in what really are relatively simple services. Navicare and others like them offer such a large suite of services. Something as simple as having a straightforward report that comes back right away, letting you know which claims never got through and what the problems are with those who did get through has made a big impact on your ability to collect.

Agnes: Yes, it has, and you know, I can assure you with a 50-60 physician group there was a lot of nervousness going around when we first decided to switch and Navicare

has made it an incredibly easy process to switch over to them with the enrollment and with the ERAs coming electronically and the money being deposited right into the bank account. It has been a smooth process.

Pamela: That's good to hear. So how would you say overall that using the services of a robust clearinghouse has impacted your ability to collect? Do you have numbers to support that?

Agnes: Like I mentioned before, our AR in total went down 25%, which is significant just within six months of using Navicure, but most of all I think the biggest success that we've had is being able to bring on 18 more physicians without adding any more resources to our staff.

Pamela: That's great. More income with the same expense. That's a good way to make your business work.

Agnes: Correct, especially nowadays.

Pamela: Alright, Agnes. Thank you so much for your time.

Agnes: Thank you.

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