Working Hard to Meet Meaningful Use Requirements for your EHR System?

Here's a way to work as smart as you work hard!

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Credentialing your medical assistants allows you to delegate entry tasks so you can meet your Incentive Program goals!

If your practice is participating in the Medicare and Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program, the last several months have witnessed important developments that can make it easier for your practice to comply with Stage 2 meaningful use core measures. In fact, not only does it make compliance easier, it can even help you improve the job satisfaction of your physicians and nurses while improving relationships with patients.

Thanks to recent rulings by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), you can now delegate entering physician orders into your EHR system to credentialed medical assistants. To qualify, a medical assistant must hold credentials awarded by a third-party standardized testing body. Physicians and nurses no longer have to split their attention between the patient before them and the EHR system over their shoulder. They are free to spend more time with patients knowing that a qualified professional will see that orders are entered properly. And – these orders count toward your practice's meaningful use core measures.

How is this possible? Through two key developments.

First, the EHR Incentive Program is now entering Stage 2, which differs from Stage 1 in several respects. In addition to medication orders required for Stage 1 incentives, for Stage 2 providers must demonstrate meaningful use of EHR systems for entering radiological and laboratory orders. In order to qualify for the incentive, medical offices must continue to demonstrate substantial integration of their EHR system into their practice workflow, and must continue to increase their usage of the EHR system.

Second, is the key development allowing credentialed medical assistants to enter medication orders into the EHR system. Previously, these entries could only be done by licensed medical professionals. CMS extended the group of personnel permitted to enter orders to include only one non-licensed professional group – appropriately credentialed medical assistants.

Note: if your state has regulations or professional rules for medical assistants, those regulations and rules trump the decision of the CMS. Before permitting credentialed medical assistants to enter orders in EHR, you should verify that here are no local rules that prohibit or limit relevant tasks that can be performed by Credentialed MAs.

A few words about what constitutes a valid credential according to the CMS decision:

- Not just any medical assistant can enter orders into an EHR - only medical assistants who hold credentials from an organization other than the organization employing the medical assistant. Accordingly, your medical assistants need a credential from a third party, like the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) credential from National Healthcareer Association.
- The CCMA credential is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and is recognized by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs (CAAHEP), a designation not every professional credential can claim.

When your medical assistants are credentialed, you have employees who can add considerable value to your practice. Shifting order entry to your Credentialed MAs means that all the medical professionals in your office can focus on their core talents: doctors and nurses will have more time to spend with patients and medical assistants will provide even more support that keep the practice running smoothly.

So, in addition to the many other duties a credentialed MA can perform, they can add considerable efficiency to your workflow and greater satisfaction to your doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, and most importantly – patients!

Consider the benefits to these three groups:

Medical Professionals	Patients	Certified Medical Assistants
Free to spend more time meeting with patients and practicing medicine.	More face time with their doctor or nurse.	Often very comfortable with technology and can learn the system quickly.
Better workflow – no longer forced to race between patients and administrative tasks.	Happier because their doctor is focused on communicating, rather than multi-tasking.	Can devote more time to becoming "expert users."
Removes a burden for those who may be unenthusiastic about learning a new technology.		Develop valuable cross-training opportunities and a better understanding of the practice as a business.

To learn more about how Certified Clinical Medical Assistants can help you meet Stage 2 Meaningful Use initiatives, please contact us at **1-800-499-9092** or **nhasales@nhanow.com.**