

Successful Partnerships In Action

York Central Hospital and Salumatics Coding Partnership Ensures On-Time ERNI Data Submission

York Central Hospital is a 506 bed community hospital located in Richmond Hill, Ontario providing Emergency, Inpatient, Ambulatory, Continuing and Long-Term Care services to a community of over 500,000 residents in Southwest York Region. In addition to the services it provides locally, York Central Hospital is the District Stroke Centre for York Region and is home to a number of regional services including: the York Region Chronic Kidney Disease Program, York Region Domestic Assault and Sexual Assault Care Centre, and the York/Simcoe Behavior Management and Autism Programs.

Since 2001, York Central Hospital (YCH) has been outsourcing the coding and abstracting of all patient visits (including In-Patient, Day Surgery, and Emergency Room) to an outside service provider (Salumatics Inc., Mississauga, Ontario). In a typical year at YCH, there are 18,000 in-patient visits, 92,000 outpatient visits, and 76,000 emergency room visits.

The Challenge

Commencing in January 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Health

(MOH) and Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) implemented a reporting requirement that stated hospitals providing Emergency Room (ER) services must submit Level 1 Emergency Room NACRS Initiative (ERNI) data by the third business day of the next month and Level 3 data by the 10th business day of the next month. For example, all patient ER visits for December 2009 would have to be complete to Level 1 by the third business day of the month in January, that is, January 6th, 2010 and Level 3 by January 15th, 2010. (The level 1 data submission consists of only the date and times that a patient was registered in the ER, triaged and left the ER. The Level 3 submission contains all required data.)

Prior to the new January 2010 reporting requirement, the established process was for the coders to code all the patient visits to the Level 3 requirement from the prior month by the 23rd day of the subsequent month. This allowed the Data Quality staff to run quality audits and make any corrections

well before the end of each month.

In order to meet the new ERNI Level 1 requirements, coders had to commence concurrent coding of ER visits starting in December 2009. This was typically when they would have been coding ER visits from November 2009. As such, it required two months of ER admissions, November and December, be coded in a one-month period, representing approximately 14,000 visits.

The Solution

In a typical in-house health information management environment, coding the equivalent of twice the normal volume of ER visits would mean that the coders and Data Quality



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staff work considerable overtime hours, with a corresponding expenditure impact on the organization. The YCH-Salumatics partnership is based on a per visit fee; any increase in costs is based solely on the volume of visits coded, not on the number of hours that coders are required to work to meet specific volume targets.

From their coding pool Salumatics assigns a core group of experienced CHIMA credentialed coders to code the required volume of YCH ER visits and also ensures that this coverage provides contingency for vacation, sick leave and any increases in volume.

This ability to vary staff levels meant that Salumatics had access to a sufficient number of coders to permit the coding of two months of YCH ER visits in the compressed one month time frame.

The Salumatics coders completed coding two months of YCH ER visits to the Level 3 ERNI requirement in one month and YCH submitted the Level 1 data by the third business day of January deadline. MOH/CIHI guidelines require that only the level 1 submission be completed by the third business day deadline. The subsequent submission of Level 3 data was performed on the 10th business day of January. There was no overall increase to YCH in the cost of coding two months of ER visits.

Data Quality Audits of the

ER coding is performed concurrently throughout the month prior to the Level 1 submission and an additional Data Quality Audit is performed prior to the Level 3 submission. Following the January 2010 submission of the data for November and December 2009, Salumatics commenced concurrent coding of YCH ER visits and continues to ensure that YCH meets all MOH/CIHI reporting deadline, on time and within budget.

The reporting of ERNI data is part of an initiative of the Ontario Ministry of Health to reduce the ER wait time and improve access for patients who visit emergency departments throughout the province. According to Anthony Hoad-Reddick, Manager Health Information and Performance Measurement at YCH, "The freshness of the data allows for virtually real time internal reporting and analysis of key performance indicators, which are tied to funding through the pay for performance incentive program."

These key statistics are reported through Wait Times Ontario and are publicly available.

The Technology

Salumatics coders have secure 24/7 access to the YCH patient charts via the YCH Portal which provides access to McKesson Horizon Patient Folder (HPF), Horizon Expert Documentation (HED) and the coding software application. All

access is encrypted using the Citrix Metaframe application. Coders access patient documentation and data in HPF and HED formats, and utilize this information to enter the required data into the coding application. YCH has critical ER dates and times interfaced into the coding application from their McKesson STAR ADT system. Says Steven Green, Director, Projects/Coding at Salumatics, "Our coders simply have to validate that these dates/times match what is recorded in the electronic medical record documentation."

The Result

By outsourcing to Salumatics the coding of its ER visits, YCH is assured that all external and internal reporting deadlines are met. Coding is now completed for all ER visits to the Level 3 requirement by the 3rd business day of the month, regardless of the volume of visits, and that the quality and accuracy of the data reported is of the highest standard. Says Diane Salois-Swallow, Chief Information Officer, YCH, "I am very proud to be associated with Salumatics, a company that has a vision in helping hospitals to reduce costs, be more efficient and create capacity for additional patient care initiatives."