

THE Value Initiative

Members in Action: Implement Operational Solutions

ChristianaCare – Wilmington, Del.

Improving the Patient Financial Experience

Overview

When leaders at ChristianaCare started examining the steps of their revenue cycle for process improvement, they found that many steps were patient-facing. They determined that revamping the billing process was a way to improve the patient experience.

Rob McMurray, chief financial officer at ChristianaCare noted, “We’re here to serve our community. We’re here to anticipate the needs of others, in this case, the members of our community, our patients. How can this traditional back office function enhance patient experience?”

The new billing experience is tailored to anticipate patient needs and meet different preferences. For example, when ChristianaCare explored how people want to be billed, McMurray’s team recognized that the traditional paper bill might not be the preferred form for the various age demographics they



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serve. Working with Cedar, the health system developed a new billing platform giving patients the option to receive their bill through email, text or traditional U.S. mail. ChristianaCare also simplified the process so that even non-tech savvy people could navigate the online payment platform. Artificial intelligence is built into the system to understand patient demographics and make it easier for them to pay in the right way; the system will offer an interest-free payment plan up front if appropriate for the patient. Furthermore, the system greatly improves the timeliness of the bill, so that patients can easily connect the bill with the recent service they received.

Impact

Patients report improved satisfaction with the new billing system. The Cedar platform collects about 30,000 bills monthly and as part of the process, the health system collects surveys on the patient experience. McMurray recounted a comment from one patient who noted that the new billing platform gave her a sense of empowerment. She liked receiving a payment plan up front and, she did not have to contact a billing department representative to request a payment plan. It made her more comfortable making payments and she felt that she no longer had to avoid care out of worry for how she would pay.

ChristianaCare also reduced the complexity of the information patients see in their bills. They want patients to understand what they are paying for – summarizing services when possible and using less technical language, when possible.

Future Goals

Modernizing the billing process enabled ChristianaCare to prioritize the patient financial experience.

Individuals in the administrative billing department now have the leeway to put their creativity and energy into thinking about how to improve patient engagement with this portion of the care experience. McMurray explained that while people working in health system billing may not see themselves as caregivers, they have a unique window into the patient financial experience and can put their insights and passion into improving the process and make a difference for patients.

Lessons Learned

Collecting feedback during the online payment process has been invaluable to ChristianaCare. They will continue to process patient responses to continuously improve the patient financial experience.

Another takeaway is the importance of recognizing that serving a multigenerational patient population requires different avenues for communication. Allowing patients to select how they want to receive communication lets ChristianaCare be more patient-centered in their billing approach.

The process of revitalizing the patient financial experience has enabled people in billing to connect back to ChristianaCare's core values of love and excellence and is helping them find more purpose in their work. McMurray described how improving the patient financial experience is a key part of being a caregiver, as ChristianaCare considers all its employees to be caregivers. "If there was something in the administrative experience that is causing patients to forego care, that's something we need to address. And that really opened our eyes. And it's something we're proud of...that's meaningful, it's fulfilling, it helps caregiver engagement and patient engagement."

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