



Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals

IOD's Coding, Auditing and Education Services Provide Coding Coverage at TJUH

Provider Profile:

- Three Hospitals - 957 beds
- 46,321 admissions
- 472,850 outpatient visits
- 112,962 ED visits

Results:

- Provide coding and CDI resources
- Maintain DNFB at target levels
- Improve accuracy through reviews and audits
- Provide customized coding education curriculum

Background:

Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals (TJUH) are dedicated to excellence in patient care, patient safety and the quality of the healthcare experience. US News and World Report ranks them as one of the nation's top medical centers in 11 specialties. TJUH takes pride in educating the health professionals of tomorrow and discovering new knowledge to define the future of clinical care.

Within the Health Information Management (HIM) department at TJUH, clinical coding staffing levels were a major revenue cycle concern. Industry and regulatory changes directly added to HIM's workload and reduced productivity, further complicating the coder shortage. Other HIM processes such as clinical documentation improvement (CDI) and clinical abstracting (Core Measures) were also in need of credentialed resources. This was all happening at the same time TJUH was experiencing growth in patient numbers.

Challenge:

Taking advantage of a new 3M document management system, the organization's HIM leadership decided to combine coding teams. Coders from the three hospitals and outpatient areas were centralized into a single HIM department. The goal: increase productivity and stabilize coding resource requirements.

According to Dina Nedorost, RHIT, CCS, AHIMA ICD-10 Approved Trainer and Director of Coding & Data Operations, Health Information Management Department, at the time of consolidation there was more work than TJUH coders could manage. Because qualified, credentialed coders were in short supply, there was an overwhelming need for supplemental resources. Furthermore, TJUH was faced with significant week-to-week fluctuations in coding needs.

Despite these challenges, HIM remained committed to maintaining high quality standards within the work produced. To achieve this goal, an elite team of coders and coding managers from IOD were assigned to code records as well as conduct continuous quality reviews and coding audits. In addition, HIM felt strongly about the importance of continuing education for its coders. Realizing that educational resources have unique skill sets, TJUH again looked to IOD to fulfill training needs.

Solution:

"Having used IOD for the past 12 years in various capacities, it was easy to look to them for help with the current issues, and future ones as well," mentions Nedorost. "We chose to adapt coding workflow to produce weekly schedules of HIM resources required from IOD," she adds. TJUH sends a weekly email to IOD stating their needs, usually 180 hours per week for coding and another 80 hours for quality review/audit. In the event that additional hours are needed, IOD is prepared to accommodate. She further adds, "We are loyal to IOD because they are loyal to us."

"The IOD coding and quality staff is very productive and extremely professional," adds Nedorost. "IOD resources fit right in with the TJUH centralized coding team and are treated just like the in-house employees. They are included in all we do."

Nancy Rhodes, VP of Revenue Cycle, concurs adding, "IOD's collaborative approach to auditing and quality monitoring provides consistent operational and financial benefits to our organization."

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Nancy Rhodes
VP Revenue Cycle





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Results:

After the centralization, a few new coding issues surfaced and IOD was quick to provide solutions. Three important objectives were achieved as a result of the TJUH-IOD partnership.

Coder Cross-Training

Coders from each hospital were familiar with their own areas, but not the other hospitals' workload. The IOD consultants were involved in coding records from all the entities and, as a result, they became cross trained as part of the centralization initiative. "With IOD's proactive approach to our entire health system, we were able to utilize all IOD consultants to fulfill our coding needs across the enterprise," mentions Nedorost.

More Consistent Coding

With a major focus on quality, it was clear that a uniform, approach would be needed across all the coding teams. The IOD team implemented best practice workflows to ensure consistency across the organization; in fact, TJUH coding management continues to consult with IOD for best practice advice and continuing education customized to their facility.

Keeping DNFB on Track

Finally, and perhaps most importantly to TJUH revenue cycle executives, IOD helps ensure the organization's DNFB targets are met. "They care about the DNFB as if they were employees and they know that midnight on Thursday is a big deal," Nedorost states. "IOD has had a very favorable impact on our DNFB." "In fact, they support us on weekends with their 'weekend blitzes' to ensure we had 7 day a week coverage at key times."

IOD is the go to resource to fill TJUH needs. IOD's credentialed resources also provide HIM services in CDI and Core Measures. While these areas are outside of Nedorost's focus, she is still quick to recommend IOD, "Basically, if IOD does it and we need that help, IOD is the choice of Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals."

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