

Conway Regional Health System receives Governor's Award with help from CDI turnaround

nThrive implements CDI program to make major improvements in one year

Business issue

Conway Regional Health System (Conway Regional) recognized the dire need to improve physician approach to clinical documentation and reduce unnaturally high mortality rates.

Overview

Established in 1921 by Colonel John E. Little, Conway Regional is a 150-bed, not-for-profit Medical Center, providing top quality medical care to a five-county area in northern central Arkansas. The health system provides complete health care services, including heart health, cancer care, women's health, surgery and rehabilitation. With more than 200 physicians on the medical staff, more than 1,200 employees and approximately 100 volunteers, Conway Regional is committed to making better health care a reality in their communities.

Problem

Conway Regional had attempted to implement a Clinical Documentation Improvement (CDI) program in the past, and made some progress, but lack of a long-term maintenance structure resulted in inconsistent outcomes. Then one day, the Conway Regional Executive Leadership Team (ELT), including Chief Financial Officer Steve Rose, opened an issue of Modern Healthcare and found that Conway Regional had been ranked fourth highest in the nation in terms of mortality rates, portraying Conway Regional as a place one should avoid for health care. Rose and the rest of the ELT realized that something needed to be done to make any CDI gains more impactful and sustainable. After a third party company evaluated the provider's quality of care, the ELT found what they suspected; it was not the quality of care that had led to such high mortality rates. In fact, they discovered that inaccurate documentation of care provided, especially severity of illness (SOI) and risk of mortality (ROM), did not take into account how sick certain patients were. On paper, it looked as though the hospital was doing a poor job of caring for their patients.



97%

2017 Physician Query rate

2.0

CMI rating in select categories



nThrive has been a solid partner in getting a CDI program up and running again at Conway Regional, and the results speak for themselves. We now have a program in place that not only is achieving significant results, but also has the ongoing ability to continue to track, monitor and manage our CDI program for sustainable results well into the future.”

STEVE ROSE, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER,
CONWAY REGIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Solution

Conway Regional sought help from nThrive CDI consulting and outsourcing program. nThrive immediately placed two Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists (CDIS) on-site at Conway Regional and implemented nThrive CDI technology that automates the CDI program from end to end. With the technology, the organization had a tool to manage CDI case workflow and manage the physician query process. A priority task was to educate physicians on the importance of specificity in their documentation, specifically severity of illness and risk of mortality. “Once our doctors realized what an overriding issue the high mortality index was and how it was impacting the reputation not only of the hospital, but of them as well, they became concerned and were interested in how the CDI program could help,” observed Rose.

nThrive implemented solid initiatives to build a strong, long-lasting documentation program that would boost the health care provider’s outcomes, patient care and reputation.

Physician education – nThrive Education provided on-line CDI training and nThrive CDISs conducted one-on-one education with Conway Regional physicians to demonstrate the importance of quality documentation and to change old habits.

Improved reporting – With nThrive CDI Technology, CDISs provide monthly reports to Conway Regional ELT so they can monitor crucial statistics, such as physician query response and acceptance rates. Each quarter, nThrive meets with the ELT to review quality indicators and program performance.

Refocused Physician Committee – Conway Regional refocused its existing physician-led committee emphasizing documentation improvement and its impact on mortality rate reporting.

Integration of EMR and CDI – By integrating the provider’s Electronic Medical Record System (EMR) with CDI technology, the CDI team sends queries to physicians directly through the EMR for more visibility and improved, faster response rates.

Mortality rounds – The CDISs now participate in mortality rounds to ensure proper SOI and ROM documentation.

Query templates – nThrive provided ICD-10 prepared query templates for specific areas of care, making the query process more efficient, and improving documentation specificity.

Query escalation process – An escalation process was instituted for unanswered queries, and a physician champion liaison between the CDISs and the physician staff was assigned.

Value

The new CDI program, resources and technology implemented by nThrive contributed to a remarkable turnaround at Conway Regional. The mortality rate index for pneumonia* dropped from 2.0 to 0.97 in one year, essentially cut in half. The mortality rate index for Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI)* went from 1.79 to 0.47 in one year. The Case Mix Index (CMI) also improved, from an average of 1.27 to 1.32 in five months, which Conway Regional estimates to represent a \$260,000 increase in revenue. In 2014, Conway Regional was awarded the Governor’s Award for Performance Excellence by Governor Mike Beebe, in recognition of the health care provider’s overall improvement in quality, including CDI.

*Erroneous documentation of care provided, specifically severity of illness (SOI) and risk of mortality (ROM)



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