

Sarasota Memorial Health Care System

Sarasota, FL

Situation

Sarasota Memorial Health Care System's (SMHCS's) customer service motto is to "deliver quality patient experiences beyond discharge." In line with this objective, SMHCS sought to improve quality and performance among its teams to better serve its patients, families and physicians. The hospital focused improvement efforts in key areas of revenue cycle including Scheduling/Insurance Verification, Registration and Patient Financial Services.

SMHCS sought to accomplish the following:

- Improve quality of staff encounters and boost service levels to patients, physicians, patient representatives, insurance companies, attorneys and families.
- Streamline management of faxed physician notifications.
- Reduce preventable denials from insurance companies.

Approach

SMHCS partnered with Vyne Medical to conduct an assessment of departmental processes. Working closely together, the team identified the following areas in need of solution:

- Boost service and performance by improving quality of staff encounters with patients, physicians and others.
- Increase accuracy and efficiency with immediate access to needed records.
- Streamline workflow with paperless approach to physician notifications and confirmations.
- Establish proof of verbal, fax and electronic authorization to prevent and overturn denied claims.

SMHCS and Vyne Medical worked together to identify and prioritize best practices to address these gaps. Best practices were implemented in phases and hardwired through supporting technology solutions.



819-bed hospital

Among the Largest Public Health Systems in Florida

Approximately:
4,000 Staff
800 Physicians
1,000 Volunteers

Identifying Gaps, Defining Best Practices

SMHCS and Vyne Medical worked together to identify and prioritize best practices to address these gaps. Best practices were implemented in phases and hardwired through supporting technology solutions.

"We don't have the patient sitting in front of us, so all we have to go on is what we communicated over the phone," said Teresa Namel, Pre-Arrival Services Supervisor. "It is critical to have these records as a reference for quality review, training and performance improvement."

Alexander Wemyss
Manager of Collection Services

Solution

SMHCS implemented the following best practices using supporting solutions available through Vyne Medical's Trace platform:

[Recording and scoring of phone calls in Scheduling, Pre-Arrival Services, Registration and Patient Financial Services](#)

SMHCS's scheduling department services nine off-site facilities and receives an average of 800 calls per day. Nine schedulers answer phone calls, with an additional nine who serve as back-up for high call volume. In the first phase of its engagement with Vyne Medical, the hospital implemented Trace Voice On-Demand™ to record these calls. Details such as demographics, prep instructions and facility directions are key elements often referenced in recordings.

SMHCS also began recording all inbound and outbound calls in Patient Financial Services where staff handle encounters related to billing, reconciliation and patient concerns. With management oversight, the team references Trace recordings to double-check demographic and insurance information, investigate patient complaints and deescalate concerns. Trace recordings are cross-referenced in the hospital's billing and registration systems for easy retrieval.

To expand its ability to monitor employee performance, SMHCS implemented Trace Quality Manager™ (TQM), the Trace quality scoring module, in December 2013. Patient Access leaders use TQM's online scorecards to review and score a random sampling of recordings and chart staff performance by individual, team and key measure. The scorecards quantify qualitative factors such as tone and empathy, providing an objective measure to compare and track performance over time.

"Healthcare is so much about metrics and benchmarks. You can listen to calls, but how do you really compare performance without an objective measure?" said Alexander Wemyss, MBA, CHAA, Manager of Collection Services. "TQM allows us to track quality just as we do key measures such as collections, call duration and hold time."

SMHCS performs individual and team audits of TQM data on a monthly basis. Agents are able to see their performance trend and where it stands in comparison to the rest of the team.

"TQM gives me the ability to score factors that I can't see in the notes; things that only listening to a recording can bring out," said Wemyss. "What is our attitude? Are we listening? Are we taking ownership? These are all the things we know to do but are not able to measure without hearing and scoring the interactions."

Automation of faxed physician notifications and scheduling confirmations.

SMHCS's scheduling department implemented Trace FaxCert® for electronic management of faxed notifications to physician offices. When a patient is scheduled, schedulers use FaxCert to send a confirmation to the physician, alerting the office of the date and time of the procedure. This electronic process replaced the hospital's former method of calling each office with the confirmation.

Documentation of insurance authorization and communication.

Insurance verification specialists use Trace to record calls to insurance companies when obtaining authorization. The recordings document the code and the procedure that is authorized. If a claim is later denied for lack of authorization, the hospital uses the recordings to overturn the denial. Insurance verification also uses the Trace PixCert® electronic capture tool to document authorization obtained from payer web sites.

On the Inpatient side, SMHCS's Financial Resource Center records calls with insurance companies and Medicaid for authorization purposes. PixCert and FaxCert are also used to document fax and electronic communication with payers. Recordings are referenced when needed to overturn denials, as well as for quality and performance improvement.

Results

Through its partnership with Vyne Medical, SMHCS has realized significant improvements in patient experience, physician and staff alignment, process improvement and financial performance.

Patient Experience.

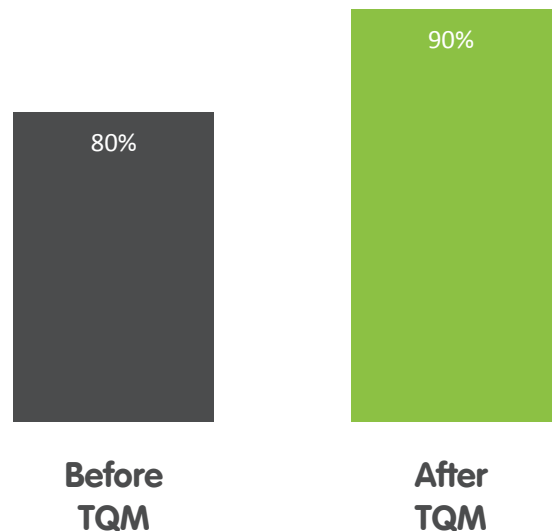
Since implementing Trace, SMHCS has improved the quality of staff interactions with patients, families, physicians and others. Call recordings serve as a valuable tool to identify training opportunities, correct misunderstanding and conduct root cause analysis of any issue.

If a patient arrives at the wrong location for service, for example, the hospital reviews the recording to listen to the directions he/she was given during scheduling. Or if a patient survey happens to reference an issue with scheduling or registration, leaders review the recording to determine if any corrective action needs to be taken.

Staff also routinely listen to their own calls during the audit process to correct any mis-keyed information, troubleshoot issues and determine alternate ways to handle difficult situations. This process helps staff be more cognizant of the way they sound when communicating with patients.

"Staff behavior and tones have improved as a result of being recorded," said Robb Wilburn, Director of Patient Registration in Pre Arrival Services. "It helps us be at our best, which is something we want to be every day for our patients."

Quality Scores Effectiveness Rate



Patient Financial Services has also used TQM to improve the quality of staff interactions with patients. In the nearly-two-year period since implementing TQM, quality scores have increased from an 80% effectiveness rate to nearly 90%. Employee satisfaction has also remained high, with a staff retention rate of 100% over the same time period.

"We look at the big picture for the month and compare it to the last six months to see how we are trending. Then we drill down by going directly to a particular call, or even a certain portion of a call, to review opportunities for improvement."

Recordings are also a valuable communication tool to ensure continuity of care between departments. If a patient relays a concern about quality of care to an employee in PFS, for example, the employee will escalate the recording for risk review as an alert and opportunity for patient follow-up.

Physician & Staff Alignment.

SMHCS has improved working relationships with physician offices as a result of implementing Trace. Because all scheduling calls are recorded, the hospital has documentation of verbal orders placed by physicians. If an office calls and says that an MRI was ordered but a CT was scheduled, the hospital can retrieve the recording, listen to the order and address accordingly.

Behavior patterns have also improved as a result of both hospital and office staff being aware of the hospital's recording policy. Attitudes are kept in check and professionalism is better maintained in day-to-day interactions. In the case of misunderstanding, the hospital can provide a recording or written transcript to the office to help resolve the issue.

Workflow and Process Improvement.

SMHCS's paperless approach to physician notifications has made for a more efficient, streamlined scheduling process. Rather than calling the offices with scheduling confirmations, schedulers now fax them electronically and maintain a record of the notification through Trace. This has been a significant time saver, reducing the number of outbound calls to physician offices.

Financial Performance.

SMHCS has improved financial performance by reducing denials, as well as streamlining workflow between departments. With an objective record of all phone, fax and electronic communication with insurance companies and agencies, the hospital has a permanent back-up to defend against preventable denials. This proof of authorization has been used to prevent and overturn a significant number of denials.

Conclusion

Sarasota Memorial Health Care System has achieved outstanding results by

delivering quality patient experiences and providing legendary customer service. Call recording and scoring supports the hospital's efforts to improve quality and service to patients, physicians and other key stakeholders. Documenting insurance authorization from payers has reduced denied claims and boosted financial performance. Electronic faxing has created a more efficient work environment, streamlining workflow and improving collaboration among teams.

Sarasota Memorial's partnership with Vyne Medical – and real-time access to voice, fax and electronic records through Trace – has resulted in tremendous gains in patient experience, physician and staff alignment and financial performance for the hospital.

Since implementing TQM, employee **satisfaction** has remained high, with a **staff retention rate of 100%** over a 20-month period.

Contact Vyne Medical today and find out what gaps Trace can help bridge for your organization.
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