Collaboration to Improve Patient Throughput Post-COVID-19

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is implementing changes to help patients and providers through the pandemic. Organizations need to understand these changes and adapt their daily processes accordingly to provide quality, cost-effective care. Hospital case management departments need to work with internal departments and external organizations to understand their challenges in this environment.

Starting with the end in mind, leadership from internal departments should collaborate to put processes in place so that patients and caregivers understand their options for discharge and organizations can be paid for their services. The case management department should work with the revenue cycle team to make sure claims are paid timely. Both departments should understand the CMS waivers and how they could affect daily operations. For example, the skilled nursing facility (SNF) three-day qualifier does not apply during the COVID-19 crisis. It is imperative to have a documentation process in place and validate that key indicators are documented to prevent or respond to future denials.

Case management leadership can facilitate group meetings with pre- and post-acute healthcare providers and use collective group wisdom to build a cooperative problem-solving environment. Working together will help the team foster creativity, discuss new ideas, and provide support. This group will discuss COVID-19 challenges, operational issues, and recommendations for moving forward.

It is crucial to educate the entire healthcare team (physicians, nurses, case managers, social workers, and nurse navigators) on any process changes so that everyone understands the impact on their department and daily work.

Putting the pieces back together after working through the COVID-19 crisis presents many challenges. Organizations can achieve this by understanding the CMS changes and collaborating with internal teams and external organizations to develop plans to adapt to the new normal environment.