



3 Practical Steps to Improve ASC A/R

Bill Gilbert, vice president of marketing, and Brice Voithofer, vice president of ASC and anesthesia services, for AdvantEdge Healthcare Solutions, share the following three changes an ASC can make which will help boost collections efforts immediately.

AT A GLANCE:

1. Don't get burned by repeat non-paying patients.
2. Make sure staff is comfortable asking for money.
3. Develop regular proce

DON'T GET BURNED BY REPEAT NON-PAYING PATIENTS

With an increase in high deductible plans and general economic challenges, more patients are having their bills sent to collections, and this will often lead an ASC to eventually write-off unpaid co-pays and deductibles. Considering that patients can be repeat customers to an ASC, some non-paying patients will eventually return. "There's nothing worse than having someone you did a procedure for never pay, and now you're seeing them again and you're likely just going to take another hit," says Mr. Voithofer.

The solution: Develop a policy and procedure followed by schedulers where the scheduler looks on a list or a note within your billing system during the scheduling process, and identifies if a patient previously had a balance the ASC wrote off or is currently in the active collections process. "Then have the [scheduler] educate patients that they're not having another procedure unless they pay the outstanding balance, and remember to avoid any issues which could be classified as abandonment," says Mr. Voithofer. "Putting this tool in place is easy and could generate significant revenues — it can be a few hundred dollars written off with each account, and that adds up very quickly."

MAKE SURE STAFF IS COMFORTABLE ASKING FOR MONEY

Smart ASCs hire friendly and personable team members for their front-desk and registration positions. While these character traits are important for providing a good patient experience, another critical trait often overlooked, that is vital to the financial stability of a center, is the ability to comfortably ask for the money owed to the center from patients. "Many, if not most, front desk personnel are generally not trained to ask people for money, and many are downright uncomfortable being asked to do so," says Mr. Gilbert. "An ASC's management needs to recognize that and deal with it in their training. You can be pleasant and professional and still ask for what you're entitled to get paid."

There are many different ways to train staff to ask for money, including providing scripts or individual training with experienced staff members. What's also critical is making it understood that asking for monies owed is a job requirement, says Mr. Gilbert. "[Staff members] need to know how to easily look

up the co-pay and deductible, tell the patient what is owed, and find out how the patient will pay for [these expenses] as opposed to leaving it to their own devices to figure out how to ask that question," he says. "They're going to be uncomfortable if they're not coached through the process."

DEVELOP REGULAR PROCESSES AND ESTABLISH A PERFORMANCE BASELINE

ASC to have a solid set of protocols everyone on the staff understands and follows month after month, says Mr. Voithofer. "If you're starting, stopping, trying different things and not having a standard that you follow each month, then you never know what's actually working."

Once your ASC finds a certain process that is effective at producing desired results, make it a policy and a requirement for everyone to follow. "This provides consistency that gives the ability to benchmark, to monitor performance and manage it," he says. Trying new [approaches] is perfect if you have a positive attitude about continual process improvement, but you need a baseline to compare improvements against."

Originally published by Becker's ASC Communications