

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

Pathology Services of Springfield/Tri-Lakes Pathology, an Independent Lab and hospital-based surgical pathology practice based in Springfield, Missouri is a physician-owned and operated pathology practice comprised of eight physicians. Pathology Services of Springfield (PSS) is CAP accredited, and CLIA Certified. PSS is a stable presence in the community providing high-quality pathology services for four decades.

Billing and coding for PSS were accomplished in-house by a manager and employed billing staff. After 40 years of employment, the internal billing manager announced her intention to retire. With the impending retirement of the long-time employee, the leadership of PSS began to examine the practice needs relative to the changing healthcare environment, complex reimbursement requirements and regulations, more sophisticated compliance environment, and necessary IT infrastructure.

The in-house billing system was unsophisticated, had minimal automation, and maintaining even their limited interfaces to the hospital systems needed for successful charge and demographic capture proved challenging. These factors not only raised concerns around meeting current compliance standards but also made for an involved, time-consuming manual billing process.

Given that the billing and coding had been primarily managed by one person for over four decades, there was also a reasonable concern as to how to transfer the substantial amount of billing and coding knowledge specific to the practice to newly trained/recruited managers.

SEARCH PROCESS

Pathology Services was in search of a modernized and efficient solution that could help the practice simplify and streamline the billing process, reduce the internal costs of billing, improve revenue, as well as provide insight and guidance in specific areas such as PQRS and compliance regulations.

PSS met with multiple revenue cycle management (RCM) companies, over several months, weighing the pros, cons, and alternatives related to continuing with their internal CBO or outsourcing the entire revenue management cycle operation.

Critical evaluation points included: how well would the billing and coding company engage with the Pathology group and its current staff? How vast was the technological capability and expertise of the vendor in supporting the practice with IT infrastructure and automation? What were their demonstrable successes and revenue improvements with existing pathology clients? How did the vendor focus their people, processes, and technology for practice success? How well did the vendor fit within the practice culture and objective for practice growth? It was also important for the RCM provider to be able to offer flexibility, and customization of their solutions to meet the needs of the practice, as well as be responsive to the changing healthcare environment.

SOLUTION

After an in-depth search process, the PSS selected AdvantEdge Healthcare Solutions (AdvantEdge), who proposed a comprehensive and accountable RCM program tailored to meet the practice's specific needs and requirements. The solution designed for PSS provided substantial improvements to the organization's billing and coding, compliance monitoring, and access to data and information to manage their practice. In anticipation of the organization's future growth, the tailor-made solution was designed to address PSS technological needs by deploying AdvantEdge's proven billing and coding processes and technology, practice analytics through AdvantEdge's A2 business intelligence platform, ClientFirtsSM Service and open-access to AdvantEdge leadership.

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IMPLEMENTATION

AdvantEdge, in collaboration with PSS, led a detailed, organized and efficient 90-day implementation process. During the initial stages, the group discussed the practice's current coding and billing methodologies and implemented tools and modified the workflow to be more consistent with the practice's vision for the future. The team worked closely to outline the steps involved in the transition process and helped to ease the group's concerns by openly answering questions and assuring that AdvantEdge's structured transition framework would provide the group with ample support throughout the process.

The implementation plan created provided tailored coding, billing, collection, and compliance services that would not only be cost-effective and best meet their needs and vision for the future but would seamlessly transition the billing operations to AdvantEdge.

Follow-up meetings continued, some which included AdvantEdge's COO and others, so the group would have the opportunity to engage directly with AdvantEdge's leadership with regard to all aspects of the implementation and go-forward expectations.

With extensive input from the group, the transition plan was finalized and put into place. The first critical step was to assign a team of highly trained and experienced billing specialists, led by a skilled client manager who would continue to work closely with the practice.

AdvantEdge was also made aware and asked to manage certain other billing arrangements, such as one between the PSS' independent lab, Tri-Lakes Pathology largest referral source, which required coding be completed and reported within 24 hours of receipt. AdvantEdge's coding team offered to take on this challenge and worked to create solutions that meet the needs of both the client and its customer.

RESULTS

 The custom designed implementation and workflow created for PSS have resulted in significant savings and improved revenue for the Lab and pathology practice. The organization's decision to outsource RCM services from their in-house operation and work directly with the AdvantEdge's team has reduced duplicate processes due to automated accession checking and reconciliation, resulted in approximately a \$50K savings in annual payroll and benefits, as well as no negative revenue impact to the practice through the startup and implementation. The practice has also benefited from AdvantEdge's coding feedback, addressing many of these physicians' questions, which has also increased the practice's ability to be compliant while ensuring that everything they do clinically is properly converted to an appropriate economic event. Client collections are consistent and predictable and PSS has better data and information available to them to help manage their practice and lab.

Jami Skrade MD, Partner, Pathology Services of Springfield says,

“We are very pleased with our decision to partner with AdvantEdge for revenue cycle management services. The staff's level of expertise and attention to our organization's needs quickly and expertly identified and corrected multiple in-house billing challenges we were facing. Their willingness to work with large health systems on our behalf saved significant time, which has enabled us to focus on the practice and our patients. With AdvantEdge and their open, transparent processes, services, and access to data, we have seen improvements across the board. We are now consistently seeing increases in cash flow and revenue, and their partnership provides us more time to focus on, and grow our practice.”

To contact AdvantEdge Healthcare Solutions for information about the full suite of available revenue cycle management services, call **877-501-1611** or email info@ahsrcm.com