

DEATH OF THE BUGGY WHIP SALESMAN

Choose your electronic medical records company well, with the help of your paper-based medical documentation and charting company

Recently, I called on a senior executive from one of the nation's largest long-term care facilities. The conversation started when he asked me if I had ever heard of a buggy-whip salesperson, as I reminded him of one. Somewhat confident in my abilities, I was hoping this was a good thing. He responded by stating that that it could be a bad thing, "since buggies have been replaced by cars, the buggy whip salesman has become a symbol of anything out modeled."

Turns out what he meant was that I, and my paper forms documentation and charting business, will go the way of the buggy-whip salesman – a now forgotten relic once automobiles displaced horses, buggies and ultimately the buggy whip salesman. However, he continued, if I could find a way to adapt to the technology by complementing the technology and adding value in the process, perhaps there was a way to survive and thrive. Feeling less confident in my career choice, I decided to do a little research and was fortunate to come across an article in *The New York Times* by Randall Stross that stated: out of the "13,000 businesses in the wagon and carriage industry, a few survived and thrived, by commanding technological expertise relevant to the automobile; in fact, some of these same companies were still in business as today." They "recognized that the final product did not matter, what did matter was that the products offered made sense in the new as well as the old markets."

Instead of trying to slow the change, why not adapt to the new world, and deliver the clinical content in a more efficient and effective way with digital technology? Better said, instead of fighting technology, why not think broader by getting both medical forms companies and software companies to complement one another by either placing our proprietary forms, content and design into the software platform, or through making the transition from paper to electronic more seamless?

With the migration of medical records to EMRs and EHRs, the use of paper medical documentation, charting and records have been decreasing. However, the need to have a fully functional, scalable and reliable documentation system that reaches across the entire health care continuum has never been more important both to Federal and State regulators, providers, and software developers for electronic medical products. The best of both worlds is here. Placing the existing forms inside the software of your choice not only is logical, but it will accelerate the

adoption rate of your transition; reduce costs by getting both the medical documentation company and software company working in balance; and improve and ultimately reduce your staff's anxiety. Make sure that both your medical documentation company and software company are backed by significant experience in medical records, documentation and charting, complemented by a clinical staff, consultants, clinical advisory board, data analytics and intelligence to enhance the functionality of your electronic format. Make sure, too, that you have a common platform, as the government looks for interoperability, meaningful use and functionality standards to be met.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Use of standardized forms that most LTC and home care clinicians are familiar with;
- Integrate documentation plans created by both your staff and the medical documents company;
- Familiarity with forms and flow, saving time, money and training resources;
- Custom forms designed for your facility or work with the software developer;
- Interpretation of what your needs are up front saves valuable time and money;
- Medical documentation companies can scan the web sites and keep you up to date on any important regulatory changes — at the state and federal level;
- Medical documentation companies will answer any questions on how to use the forms in concert with your current practice;
- Medical documentation companies should offer reliable solutions/protocols that trigger positive, consistent care plans;
- Medical documentation companies should offer easy to track measurable outcomes and proven record collection systems that can be used in different care settings across the healthcare continuum;
- Medical documentation companies must have consistent standards to measure;
- Higher satisfaction amongst care givers is a direct result of less frustration and focus on the resident and the patient; and
- Custom and standard forms should be available now from your medical documentation company.

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW?

- Pick a winner: The software market is heavily saturated right now; expect a consolidation of players as the explosive growth of companies cannot continue and you may be stuck with the wrong vendor.
- Software companies may not have experience with the forms, documentation and training of staff
- Providers may have limited time to play the middle man with the software company to interpret how the form is designed, how it flows and how to fill it out.
- Monitoring, interpreting and explaining daily regulatory changes keeps you secure in the notion that you have one less thing to worry about. You can count on your medical documentation company.
- If it is not documented properly, it is not done.
- Speed to implement is shortened for both provider and software company.
- Picking the wrong partner can have serious impact, both on the organization's bottom line and morale.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO POST-ACUTE HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS?

Here are a few questions to consider:

- Does your business strategy include implementing an EHR solution?
- Has the solution been selected? Has it been piloted? Does your vendor's roadmap include the correct certification?
- Does your multi-year budget account for the investment in infrastructure, software, integration and training?
- How will your EHR solution be interoperable with disparate hospital systems, doctors and other post-acute healthcare providers?
- What information do you expect to receive from other providers?
- What information do you expect to contribute to other providers?
- Will you build individual interfaces to each provider with whom you will exchange information?
- Do you expect your application vendor to provide this capability? If so, who will fund the cost?
- Will you allow other providers to access your application? If so, how will you handle security authorization and access?
- Will you use one or more exchange gateways to allow for information exchange and access? If so, which ones and how will they interface with your EHR solution?
- In all of this, how will you ensure your information is HIPAA compliant?
- And, if you can't answer these questions, what are you going to do in order to be able to answer them?

HOW CAN YOUR MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION COMPANY HELP?

They understand that your charting needs are as unique as the patients/residents you serve. And they recognize the new challenges you face with the implementation of EHR. Count on them to help manage your EHR conversion with the continued offering of traditional paper-based products to keep vital processes flowing during transition and innovative new computer workstations when you are ready to start charting electronically. No matter where you are in the adoption process, they are here to help provide the flexibility and product options to design the charting and medical record system that works best for your organization.

Source: VCPI "What does "meaningful use" mean for post-acute healthcare"? Posted on Fri, Mar 19, 2010 @ 09:07 PM Loren Claypool, Managing Director

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