

A CASE STUDY:

MMP Partnership Helps Large Emergency Group Boost Collections, Strengthen Compliance

WAKE EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS, PA | CARY, NORTH CAROLINA

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~ Michael Brohawn,
Practice Administrator

The Organization

Cary, North Carolina-based Wake Emergency Physicians, PA, provides emergency medicine services to four WakeMed health system facilities located in the Raleigh-Cary metropolitan area. The facilities include a 515-bed, Level One Trauma Center, a 143-bed community hospital and two, free-standing 24/7 emergent care facilities. Wake Emergency Physicians employs 66 physicians and 18 physician extenders. With approximately 190,000 emergency room visits annually, the group is North Carolina's largest emergency medicine practice. Wake has been an MMP client since 2001.

Challenges

Wake Emergency previously entrusted its billing operation to a national billing vendor based on the West Coast. But problems emerged early in the relationship. A significant number of claims were routinely unaccounted for and as a result were unbillable. In addition, financial reporting and comprehensive compliance planning were virtually non-existent. Making matters worse, the time difference between the coasts often made for problematic customer service inquiries and communications. With the claims management problems worsening, the practice losing significant amounts of money and its future suddenly in doubt, practice leaders made the decision to switch billing vendors.

Results

Medical Management Professionals (MMP) was selected on the strength of its national expertise in emergency medicine and its presence in the Southeast. According to Michael Brohawn, practice administrator with Wake Emergency Physicians, the shift between old and new billing vendors went smoothly and collections recovered quickly following the transition.

Brohawn said MMP immediately instituted a number of systems and safeguards designed to ensure that all claims were identified and filed in a timely fashion. The company also worked to implement electronic connectivity with the hospitals to speed the receipt of patient demographic information. Once the system was operational, the duration between date-of-service and claim filing was reduced by approximately five days, Brohawn said.

Most importantly, the group's revenues increased significantly once MMP came onboard. Consider:

- Collections increased by 17 percent through the first year.
- Collection-per-visit jumped by 87 percent between 2001 and 2008, despite an uninsured patient population that typically accounts for approximately 27 percent of visits.
- Between 2001 and 2008, A/R days over 120 decreased from nearly 10 percent to about 1.5 percent.

"I think the increase in collections-per-visit speaks volumes about the extent to which MMP has continuously helped us improve our collections," Brohawn said.

Prompt Pay Program

Part of MMP's efforts included assisting the practice in the development of an innovative prompt pay program for patients enrolled in managed care plans that the group no longer contracted with. The program, which offers significant

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discounts to balance-bill patients if the payment is submitted in a timely fashion, has proven to be an enormous success. In fact, average collections per patient for those previously in-network have actually increased by \$30 since the program was implemented in February 2005. A companion program targeting self-pay, uninsured patients similarly offers hardship discounts of up to 50 percent for qualified, low-income patients.

Beyond the financial improvements, MMP also has played a critical role in ensuring that all payor regulations and requirements – including private, public, state and federal – are incorporated into the group’s documentation and coding processes. Periodic audits conducted by both MMP and independent third-parties help ensure ongoing compliance.

Brohawn added that MMP also has provided actionable management reporting for the group. “There isn’t a report that they haven’t been able to provide me with,” he said. “If I want to know all my Level 2 patients from a certain zip code by day of the week, they’ll produce it.”

Working for the Greater Good

MMP’s attention to detail and their relationships with other organizations helped produce a significant victory for Wake Emergency Physicians and other emergency physicians nationwide. MMP partnered with Wake Emergency Physicians, PA, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and the North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS), to file a compliance dispute against one of the carriers that MMP determined was violating the terms of a class action settlement agreement. This class action suit was brought against a group of major insurance carriers by several state medical societies and MMP’s scrutiny of payments made by one of the defendant carriers revealed that, despite the settlement, the insurance company was continuing to deny payment for EKG services provided by emergency physicians. The dispute was forwarded to the attention of court-appointed mediators and, after many months of negotiations, the health plan ultimately agreed to retroactively reimburse those affected emergency physicians nationwide.

Since that time, MMP has continued to mine the details of the settlement agreements to determine if the insurance carriers are in compliance with the terms of the agreement. Additional disputes continue to be filed where violations are suspected.

“If you want performance, integrity and service from your billing company, you get that and more with MMP,” Brohawn said. “I really view them not just as a billing company, but a trusted business partner that has the best interests of our group at heart. I can honestly say that they’ve been outstanding in every respect.”



For additional information, or to receive a proposal, please call **1.877.541.9690** or email **emergency@cbizmmp.com**

Based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, MMP has more than 80 offices and 2,000 employees nationwide. Founded in 1993, MMP serves more than 3,000 hospital-based physicians across the nation and boasts the highest client retention rate in the industry. www.cbizmmp.com