



MEMBER PROFILE

NAME

Advocate Health Care System

LOCATION

Oak Brook, Illinois

MEMBER FACTS

Advocate Health Care, based in Oak Brook, Illinois, is the largest fully integrated health care delivery system in metropolitan Chicago and the state of Illinois and is recognized as one of the top health care systems in the country. Related to both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Church of Christ, Advocate is a not-for-profit provider whose faith-based mission is to serve the health needs of individuals, families and communities through a holistic approach to health care that provides quality care and service and treats each patient with respect, integrity and dignity. To guide its relationships and actions, Advocate embraces the five values of compassion, equality, excellence, partnership and stewardship.

Overview

- Eight acute care and two children's hospitals with more than 3,500 licensed beds (including four Level I trauma centers)
- More than 200 sites offering acute care, outpatient services, home health services, counseling, day care, physician services, skilled nursing care and health care education programs
- 4,600 affiliated physicians and four premier medical groups with more than 400 physicians
- Eight physician-hospital organizations (Advocate Health Partners) comprised of 2,700 multi-specialty physicians from across the system
- Top-ranked Illinois health system (2005 Verispan Top 100 Health Networks)
- Largest trauma network in the state
- One of only five hospital systems around the country using eICU® (electronic intensive care unit) technology
- More electronically monitored beds than any other system in the nation

ADVOCATE HEALTH CARE STREAMLINES ITS CDM WITHOUT MANUAL LABOR

The Challenge

Starting a new job is almost always a challenge, but Wendi Accardi had double the challenge when she began her position of Director of CDM and Revenue Compliance for Advocate Health Care in 2003. With each of Advocate's eight hospitals having manual chargemasters, Accardi had to go to each hospital and review the CDM's line item by line item using CPT books. The time-consuming process only made it possible for her to focus on one department in each hospital. She simply knew she couldn't get through the CDM for all eight hospitals and needed to look into one of the many companies offering chargemaster software products at that time.

"I knew that I wanted a chargemaster software product that provided consistency, accuracy and the ability to analyze more than one hospital at a time," explained Accardi. "I kept getting marketing materials from various vendors and even had some demos by 3M and Ingenix, but Craneware's Chargemaster Toolkit had exactly what I was looking for at a better price."

Training and Implementation

Once Wendi decided on Craneware's Chargemaster Toolkit™ and its corporate module as the solution for Advocate Health Care, it was time for training. However, training Wendi's staff meant training team members at eight different facilities.

"I was very pleased that the training was so personalized," remarked Accardi. "The people from Craneware had a group meeting to educate our staff on the product and then went to each facility to train people at their desks. The rollout stage was done all at once, and the training was very good."

Having such a large hospital system through which to run a solution could be tricky, but Accardi and her staff have it down to a science. Advocate Health Care has two chargemaster analysts, one in-house analyst and a coding and a surgical specialist, in addition to Accardi, to handle all eight hospitals, which efficiently helps maintain control of the system.

Advocate Health Care also uses Craneware's Online Reference Toolkit™, a browser-based solution that contains information from a myriad of reference materials, sites and tools with a simple click of the mouse. It goes beyond the common reference coding tools to provide interactive resources for medical necessity, compliance and coding references and provides continuous updates via the Internet of the most current regulatory and coding changes. The solution is open for use by all of Advocate's facility department directors, eliminating the need for a CPT book.

In addition to having a solution that helps her work more productively and efficiently, Accardi doesn't at all mind using Craneware's support services. Having had Chargemaster Toolkit for almost two years, she has become accustomed to working with them. "I call them two or three times a week," said Accardi. "If I have a question for them, they either answer directly on the spot or call back within an hour. Their product is excellent, and the customer service is second to none."

Corporate Module

Taking control of multiple hospital chargemaster files and creating a corporate CDM requires an ability to efficiently and accurately recognize the same services across multiple hospitals and departments, which is exactly why Accardi and her staff chose to include the corporate module for Craneware's Chargemaster Toolkit in mid-2005. With the corporate module, Advocate Health Care's CDM is managed centrally and is almost 75 percent standardized in all eight of its hospitals.

Craneware's Chargemaster Corporate Toolkit™ identifies the same services across two or more hospital CDM's using sophisticated 'intent of service' logic in conjunction with assigned revenue and HCPCS codes. Unlike other corporate standardization vendor products, hospitals don't have to be forced into an external standard against which to match their charge detail data. Once the CDM's are linked, the corporate CDM can be edited and data is transferred seamlessly across the system.

"We chose the corporate module because we wanted to standardize verbiage from one hospital to another, which can be very different with eight hospitals," Accardi remarked. "With a decision support database from which information from the chargemaster goes into, we needed complete standardization for all of the facilities. Craneware's Chargemaster Corporate Toolkit allows us to ensure that each chargemaster and its clinical and financial outcomes in our database can be compared using the same services."

Proven Results

Although she wanted a solution that was electronic rather than manual and thus much more time efficient, Accardi also liked the regulatory and compliance functions of Chargemaster Toolkit. The Toolkit has provided Advocate Health Care with a much smoother workflow. Their analysts go through it for correct codes and perform chargemaster scrubs to make sure the codes being used are appropriate.

"Chargemaster Toolkit has absolutely helped us identify issues that we probably wouldn't have found under our old method," explained Accardi. "We were missing all kinds of things doing the CDM manually, and codes that had been deleted were still there. Now we can identify such issues much more quickly."

Education of staff, communication and understanding of coding issues and compliance are also benefits of Craneware's Chargemaster Toolkit, according to Accardi. In addition, with the Online Reference Toolkit, Advocate Health's department managers have a guide with which to navigate their chargemaster and don't need to purchase numerous books to do so.

"Chargemaster Toolkit is a really good product, and I've been very pleased with it from day one," remarked Accardi. "I've recommended it to a lot of people."

