New Toolkit Details CAC Implementation Steps

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With the ICD-10-CM/PCS compliance deadline looming, acute care and ambulatory coding staff continue to focus on discovering new mitigation strategies to offset the anticipated loss of productivity that is expected to come with ICD-10 implementation. One strategy, implementing computer-assisted coding (CAC) tools, has been presented to offset this risk as well as ensure that coding staff capture all pertinent diagnosis and procedure codes—an act that will help mitigate the risk of denials in the post-ICD-10 world. CAC uses natural language processing (NLP) to identify potential diagnoses and procedures within electronic health records (EHRs) and present the information as codes for a human coder to validate and select.

To assist in the selection of a CAC tool, AHIMA asked members with CAC experience to participate in the creation of a CAC Implementation Toolkit that could help guide organizations, health information management (HIM) professionals, and information technology (IT) professionals in selecting and implementing a CAC program that best suits the needs of their individual organization. The toolkit is expected to be available in the AHIMA Store and AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge in May.

The toolkit outlines each step in the CAC tool selection process that needs to be taken to ensure a smooth transition. Some of these steps include defining deliverables, estimating the project schedule, and anticipating a budget.

CAC Implementation Begins with Planning

The planning stage is imperative to the success of a CAC project since it helps the organization determine what, when, and how to obtain the funds, equipment, and additional resources that are necessary for implementing a CAC solution. The elements outlined in the planning section of the toolkit can serve as a guide during the development of the CAC request for proposal (RFP) process, which is also described in detail in the toolkit.

Following the planning process, organizations need to develop a project budget for the installation and maintenance of the CAC tool. Considerations should be made to include the product as a capital budget item, and cost justification should be included to illustrate the importance of the tool as a mitigation strategy for ICD-10 implementation, among other uses. The toolkit provides further details on the appropriate steps one must take to justify the purchase of the CAC product.

Next Comes Vendor Selection and Implementation

Vendor selection is another important step in the process. Organizations will need to choose a vendor that can work with the needs of the organization and a product that will compliment the workflow of the coding staff. In addition, the cost of the tool must fit within the parameters outlined during the aforementioned budget process.

The toolkit describes the steps within the CAC implementation process one can expect, which includes workflow analysis, documentation review, and document storage. The workflow analysis is intended to outline the current coder workflow and determine how that workflow will transform through the CAC implementation process. This analysis will evolve as coding staff and leadership become accustomed to the tool and learn new efficiencies.

Documentation and Training Processes Key to Success

During the implementation process, a key component for project success surrounds identifying and integrating the proper documentation. Organizations should validate and include documents from the EHR that coders use for code selection. Early

documentation review will help ensure the incorporation of appropriate documents for code selection, which will help improve workflow efficiencies.

To ensure inclusion of all appropriate documentation, coding leadership and staff should be included in the review process. IT staff should also be included in the process to determine what type and how much storage will be required to house the documents within the CAC tool, among other IT responsibilities.

Once the product is selected and implemented, the organization can begin training coders on the use of the product. Training can be accomplished in a multitude of environments, including in a classroom or remote. However, the organization should choose the setting that best suits the work environment.

In either setting, coders should be provided with appropriate training to ensure staff members understand their new role using the CAC tool, which will lead to confidence in the product and in the selection of the codes that are auto-suggested by the CAC tool. Through acceptance and use of the product, the coder should experience improved productivity and potentially improved code selection.

Analyze Workflow After Go-Live

The final part of the toolkit provides information on the workflow following go-live. This includes measuring productivity within the tool, which will help provide information on the CAC return on investment.

Additional information is provided within the toolkit for suggested quality and auditing practices, reports management, vendor support, and new employee training, all of which are important to the successful implementation of the CAC product. Organizations may want to consider having the coding staff assist in the validation of auto-suggested code quality within the product and the reporting of any issues, such as incorrect code assignment, to the vendor.

In addition, audits of coding and code selection will be important for leadership to measure the success of the tool. Within most CAC products, reports can be run to illustrate which codes the coders are manually applying versus those that the coder accepts from the CAC auto-suggestion, which can provide information to leadership on the acceptance of the tool by the coders and any additional education that may be required.

The final piece of the toolkit is the reference section. The toolkit itself provides an overview of CAC planning and implementation, but the references provide articles, example documents, and other information to help support the budgeting and implementation of the tool.

Stressed? CAC Can Help

As the healthcare industry nears the implementation of ICD-10 on October 1, 2014, and with the multitude of legislative changes surrounding healthcare currently swirling across the country, healthcare organizations will need to continue to identify innovative solutions to navigate and implement change.

Through the continued collaboration and sharing of knowledge between AHIMA members, the association can help steer HIM professionals toward a successful future, in part through documents like the CAC Implementation Toolkit.

Download
Full CAC Implementation Toolkit Available Soon

www.ahima.org and www.ahimastore.org

Download the CAC Implementation Toolkit (free to AHIMA members) for full information on how to select, implement, and manage computer-assisted coding at your facility. The toolkit is expected to be released in the AHIMA Store and AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge in May 2014.

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