

The Audits Keep Coming: Preparing Systems for Claims, Privacy, and Security Audits

Save to myBoK

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What do people dread the most? It should come as no surprise to learn that, for many of us, public speaking is near the top of the list of most-feared activities.

No matter how competent or confident we are in fulfilling our personal and professional duties, it's normal to feel apprehensive when we must perform in front of and be judged by strangers.

The public speaker, the student taking an exam, the hospital administrator facing a Joint Commission inspection, the child performing in a school recital-whatever the circumstance in which we're put to the test, it's human nature to second-guess ourselves or worry that we may not live up to the expectations of others.

HIM's Audit Fears

In HIM, perhaps the most daunting external reviews we face are RAC audits of Medicare claims and HIPAA privacy and security audits conducted by the Office for Civil Rights. No matter how prepared we are or how much care we take to follow the letter of the law, there is always the worry that maybe we haven't done enough.

HIM professionals are faced with the difficult and complex job of making sure our internal systems are up to meeting the requirements of these audits, and we face many challenges. For example, we must:

- Provide support and educate staff to respond to RAC requests
- Ensure the ability to efficiently track RAC cases and outcomes
- Prepare for the rebuttal and appeal processes

As of January 1, 2012, the task became even more challenging with the addition of the permanent RAC Medicaid program, new demonstration projects, and Part A to Part B rebilling audits. Prepayment Review and Prior Authorization of Power Mobility Device demonstrations have been delayed while CMS reviews public comments, but their implementation is expected in the near future.

Auditing Guidance

So how can we make our jobs less stressful? You'll find many answers in this issue of the *Journal*, with articles that will help you navigate the complex world of the audit, including:

- A review of lessons learned from RAC audits in 2011, what's new for 2012, and what we might expect in the future
- How to make records available to third-party reviewers without compromising patient privacy
- A guide for conducting internal privacy and security audits to assess your compliance

You'll also find a number of tools and other resources to ease the process of preparing for and conducting audits in the AHIMA Body of Knowledge and online store, both of which can be accessed through www.ahima.org.

Whatever the challenges and obstacles presented by these external audits, we all can get behind their goals. It is our mission to protect the privacy and security of patient information and prevent waste, abuse, and fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid programs, while ensuring that legitimate claims are paid.

Keeping these goals in mind should guide our work, which ultimately is to provide valid and accurate health information to support quality, cost-effective healthcare for patients.

Article citation:

Gordon, Lynne Thomas. "The Audits Keep Coming: Preparing Systems for Claims, Privacy, and Security Audits" *Journal of AHIMA* 83, no.3 (March 2012): 21.

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