
Centricity™ Practice Solution A/R Accelerator helps New England Cancer Specialists increase business productivity 36% and strengthen financial performance

Challenge
New England Cancer Specialists (NECS) is a private medical group practice of oncologists and hematologists comprising four practice sites in southern Maine.

For NECS business office manager Joanie McKenzie, replacing a host of manual processes with automated solutions from GE Healthcare was the key to helping front and back office staff do more and collect more on a daily basis. “The manual process was slow, the potential for error was high, and – as they say – time is money,” said McKenzie. “Automating processes allowed us to manage the staff’s time better, which, in turn, allowed them to tackle other job duties.”

Automating business functions to boost productivity and performance
Since adopting Centricity Practice Solution and A/R Accelerator from GE Healthcare in 2006, NECS has increased charge volume 66 percent with only a 22 percent increase in back office staffing levels – corresponding to an overall productivity increase of 36 percent.

The A/R Accelerator package comprises two primary solutions:
• Eligibility and Patient Intake Accelerator boosts productivity by automating and streamlining such front office tasks as eligibility checking, patient intake and collections.
• Claim and Remittance Accelerator improves financial performance, increasing revenue cycle efficiencies with modules for advanced claim editing, streamlined denial management and real-time task management.

Over time, NECS implemented various elements of the A/R Accelerator to help the staff accomplish even more each day. Now the practice’s end-to-end workflow from eligibility verification to remittance processing is greatly improved. “Productivity increased, error rate decreased and staff was happier and performing better,” said McKenzie.

Results
• Reduced days in A/R by 30%1
• Corrected more than 750 claim line edits per provider per month before submission1
• Reduced Accounts Receivable per provider by 19% in three months2
• Checked eligibility for as many as 230% more appointments with 83-88% fewer manual verifications3

[1] Since adopting Centricity Practice Solution and the Claim Editing Accelerator
[2] Since adopting the Task Management Accelerator
[3] Approximate results experienced since adopting the Eligibility Verification Accelerator

gehealthcare.com/cps
Automated eligibility workflow

Verifying insurance eligibility was a time-and-effort-intensive manual process, notes McKenzie. “Each verification involved making a call or checking online, when patients arrived or after they left. It was too much to do manually, so we were only able to verify approximately 30 percent to 40 percent of the visits. We paid a fee for every one we checked, even if the service was approved. If it was denied after the patient left, we paid more – in lost productivity and income – trying to collect for services already delivered.”

In 2010, NECS implemented Eligibility Verification Accelerator, an automated eligibility workflow solution that features customizable rules to identify patients for verification – before they arrive. McKenzie explained: “Now, all visits process through Eligibility Verification Accelerator. The visits that verify update automatically in Centricity Practice Solution. The only visits we work manually are the ones that fail verification, which corresponds to just five percent of our appointments and allows a single staff person to work rejections for a four-site practice.”

Streamlined front desk patient collections

From expanded coverage to increased high deductible insurance plans, healthcare reform has made improving point of service collections more important than ever. For NECS, that was no easy task. “Collecting the correct data in the front office makes a huge difference in how much money you collect in the back office,” said McKenzie. “We were trying to find and aggregate from multiple systems, which meant spending a lot of time not getting full information.”

Implemented in 2010, Patient Intake Accelerator features appointment tracking and convenient patient information snapshots to streamline patient check-in and enhance productivity. Role-specific screens help front office staff review and collect the information they need from patients quickly and intuitively.

“It’s so simple and user friendly. At a glance you can tell what you need from the patient and what you should ask for – all in one screen. The schedule is there, along with the insurance company copay and any needed referrals. It saves time and increases our productivity.”

 Optimized claim management, reduced denial rates

Days in A/R is one of the most important indicators of a practice’s financial health, and claim accuracy is the most significant determinant of days in A/R. “If you get a clean claim out the door, generally you get paid in 15 days,” said McKenzie.

“In 2006, we averaged 43 days,” added Isabella Bouffard, CPA, NECS Director of Finance. “Claim Editing Accelerator was one of the first A/R Accelerator modules we implemented.

“With Claim Editing Accelerator, NECS now averages 30 days in A/R, a 30 percent reduction,” notes Bouffard. Claim Editing Accelerator systematically monitors for erroneous or incomplete entries, and applies custom rules for automatic corrections. NECS identifies denial ‘trends’, creates rules to flag claims that fit, and reviews them to make sure they’re clean. Accurate claims or those corrected automatically are batched for filing.

“Claim Editing Accelerator scrubs claims once a day, kicking out those that past experience has taught us to examine,” McKenzie said. “Most claims go through quickly, the exceptions don’t age in A/R and there are fewer denials, which is especially important to an oncology practice. We have to purchase expensive drugs up front; a single denial because of something like a missed diagnosis can cost us thousands and wreak havoc with cash flow. Now, the Claim Editing Accelerator enables us to correct more than 750 claim line edits per provider per month before submission.”

Before Eligibility Verification Accelerator: Eligibility verified for 30-40% of appointments, all manually.

After Eligibility Verification Accelerator: Eligibility verified for 100% of appointments, only 5% manually.

“The Patient Intake Accelerator is so simple and user friendly. At a glance you can tell what you need from the patient and what you should ask for – all in one screen.”

– Joan McKenzie
Business Office Manager
Streamlined denial management

Optimizing payment also requires accurate posting of claims that insurance companies pay and rapid response to those they deny or adjust. Remittance Processing Accelerator, which NECS implemented in 2013, combines the most commonly utilized remittance functions into a single interface, making it easy to view and export explanations of benefits (EOBs), address denied procedures and process redetermination letters in a unified environment. “The old way required manual lookup, verification and five people doing it in addition to their A/R work,” said McKenzie. Now, NECS has specialized the payment posting function – one team member is the payment poster and the other four members of the team work the A/R. “With Remittance Processing Accelerator, it’s easy to search and export the EOB into a patient’s file. It’s visual, which reduces search time,” said McKenzie. Bouffard added, “We’ve been able to increase the percentage of our Accounts Receivable that are under 60 days from 78 percent in 2013 before Remittance Processing Accelerator to 85 percent today.”

Real-time task management

To streamline their work, NECS uses yet another A/R Accelerator component, Task Management Accelerator.

When any of the accelerators identifies an activity that cannot be handled by automation and requires manual intervention, it creates a task and passes it to Task Management Accelerator for prioritizing. For example, when payments post incorrectly or not at all, Remittance Processing Accelerator automatically updates the billing staff’s to-do list within the Task Management Accelerator in real time, so staff can always ensure they are working what is most important.

“The tasks you work determine your financial results. With Task Management Accelerator, we can decide what to work first and how long to work it. For example, we start with low-paying, high-return claims, such as zero pays on expensive drugs.”

Task Management Accelerator also includes reporting tools for monitoring productivity and balancing workload. The result? Faster resolution of the most impactful claims and insight into the process. After implementing Task Management Accelerator in 2012, we were able to reduce our average Accounts Receivable per provider by 19 percent within three months.

A Summary of Improvements

- Reduced days in A/R by 30%¹
- Corrected more than 750 claim line edits per provider per month before submission¹
- Reduced Accounts Receivable per provider by 19% in 3 months²
- Checked eligibility for as many as 230% more appointments with 83-88% fewer manual verifications³

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About New England Cancer Specialists

Founded in 1978, New England Cancer Specialists is a private medical group practice of oncologists and hematologists representing nearly half of the cancer specialists in Maine. Physicians work out of offices in Scarborough, Biddeford, Brunswick and Sanford, and travel to clinics in Belfast, Norway and North Conway, NH. NECS maintains ongoing collaborative relationships with the best research, treatment, and academic centers across the region and the country, and received The American Society of Clinical Oncology’s (ASCO) QOPI (Quality Oncological Practice Initiative) Certification for its commitment to continuous quality improvement in oncology care.

About GE Healthcare

GE Healthcare provides transformational medical technologies and services to meet the demand for increased access, enhanced quality and more affordable healthcare around the world. GE (NYSE: GE) works on things that matter – great people and technologies taking on tough challenges. From medical imaging, software & IT, patient monitoring and diagnostics to drug discovery, biopharmaceutical manufacturing technologies and performance improvement solutions, GE Healthcare helps medical professionals deliver great healthcare to their patients.

GE Healthcare
540 W. Northwest Highway
Barrington, IL 60010
U.S.A.

Visit the GE Healthcare IT blog at:
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@GEHealthcareIT

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