Illuminating Value

Frontline Stories of Data-informed Change

Constellation®
Together for the common good.

Through its Candello partnership, Constellation gained newfound clarity into team-based factors driving diagnostic risks and enabled operational improvements to support providers throughout the diagnostic process.

Candello
Solutions by CRICO

Constellation

Leveraging Newfound Clarity

Follow-up System Failures Hindering Diagnosis

by Laurie Drill-Mellum, MD, MPH, and Lori Atkinson, RN, BSN, CPHRM, CPPS

THE PROBLEM

Convincing providers across the diagnostic process to own their role in systemic risks.

Like many medical professional liability (MPL) insurers, we aspire to provide our customers with ever deeper data analytics to help elucidate the clinical and systemic vulnerabilities that contribute to risk for their patients, clinicians, and organizations. Through our participation in Candello, we were quickly able to determine that diagnosis-related adverse events are a challenge shared by our policyholders with their peers across the country. And, as is the case for most of our peers, diagnostic errors are our leading cause of financial loss.

Using the CRICO 12-step *Diagnostic Process of Care Framework*, we mapped our own clinical and operational breakdowns along the diagnostic process. Our data analysis identified a significant percentage of our outpatient diagnostic error claims (52%) in which the absence of a "closed-loop" communication regarding a need for follow up led to the diagnostic failure. Even when clinicians take the appropriate clinical steps to arrive at a diagnosis, operational missteps—failure to schedule a test or referral, misrouted or unreviewed test results or consult notes, etc.— still lead to diagnostic errors. This insight, that diagnostic errors are often more about follow-up systems and less about clinical judgment, broke traditional thinking that an accurate and timely diagnosis is solely the responsibility of the physician.

Before, we were concerned that without building a foundation of trust in our reasoning, efforts to tackle diagnostic error might be perceived as telling clinicians how to practice medicine...and rejected as meddling.

Leveraging our newfound clarity of the scope, impact, and driving factors behind their diagnosis-related claims, we began a multi-pronged campaign to increase awareness...

By highlighting the key patient safety vulnerabilities in the diagnostic process, we could provide operational support to target MPL risks along the way.

In addition to the analytical framework to highlight specific follow-up system failures, we could also link clinical and operational vulnerabilities with financial losses. This financial aspect enabled even more effective engagement with C-suite leaders to drive operational change.

Leveraging our newfound clarity of the scope, impact, and driving factors behind their diagnosis-related claims, we began a multi-pronged campaign to increase awareness, enable improvements, and position clinicians and administrators with methods for linking the 20/20 hindsight of MPL data with strategies for future improvements. Specifically, we developed system-focused programming and interventions to support clinicians and the entire care team through the diagnostic process. Among them:

• Web-based suite of bundled solutions for preventing diagnostic error: risk assessments, clinical guidelines, checklists, and webinars for educating and enabling leaders, clinicians and front-line health care professionals.

• Diagnostic error risk report for delivering targeted information to organization leaders highlighting key vulnerabilities in the diagnostic process, with case examples to bring these data to life.

• Top 10 checklist for preventing diagnostic vulnerabilities, and guidance for linking these data with real-time risk strategies (e.g., FMEAs and RCAs).

Our effort to reduce diagnostic error, using data-informed guidance to support development of a roadmap for organizations, enables us to tackle this issue throughout our policyholder network. On a national front, we have shared these insights across many insurance and patient safety communities.

Laurie Drill-Mellum is Chief Medical Officer and Lori Atkinson is a patient safety expert and the Content Manager for Constellation, a growing portfolio of medical professional liability insurance and partner companies.

> *In a field of research plagued by inadequate data, [Candello] is a treasure. It contains information on claims that did not result in a payment, as well as physicians' specialty and detailed information on the allegations, injuries, and their causes.*

ALLEN KACHALIA, MD, JD
JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE
MICHELLE M. MELLO, JD, PHD
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN *JOURNAL OF HOSPITAL MEDICINE,* VOL. 16, NO. 7, JULY 2021

Through its partnership in Candello's national MPL benchmarking community, Constellation gained newfound clarity into team-based factors driving diagnostic risks and enabled operational improvements to support providers throughout the diagnostic process.