Patient Outcomes and Beyond: Documentation and the Triple Aim

We are always interested in different perspectives on documentation as they relate to improving patient outcomes. Gentell representatives attended the Symposium for Advanced Wound Care in Charlotte, NC from April 25 – 29, 2018. One session that caught our attention was “Physician Documentation and the Triple Aim: Top 10 Tips” featuring speakers Kathleen Schaum, MS and Arti Masturzo, MD. As explained below, one component of the Triple Aim is improving patient outcomes. It also offers an expanded perspective.

What is the Triple Aim?

The Triple Aim is a framework developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to optimize health system performance. IHI believes that new health system designs should be developed with three equally important priorities:
1. Improving patient experience
2. Improving patient outcomes
3. Decreasing per capita costs

What is the Connection between the Triple Aim and Wound Care Documentation?

Documentation that is accurate, detailed and timely is essential to effective treatment of wounds. It clearly communicates — in writing — the information needed to make treatment decisions (diagnoses, underlying conditions, plan of care, treatments that have occurred) across the continuum of care. When wound care is documented, it meets all three criteria of the Triple Aim: the patient experience is enhanced, wounds heal more quickly, and costs are reduced.

What are the Top 10 Tips?

1. Act as if your written notes are the only method of communication: do not assume that verbal communication will occur or that it will be remembered accurately.

2. Document the specific primary and secondary diagnosis, and always document the underlying cause and co-morbidities that pertain to managing the patient condition.

3. Document the plan of care: the plan of care should be an accurate accounting of all diagnostic test results and the current care; do not rely on your own memory or that of the patient.

4. Document to support the use of advanced modalities: document conservative medical management that has been attempted or contraindicated.

5. Document all recommended services, procedures and products: regardless of the healthcare setting, federal and state laws require an order from a physician or other qualified healthcare professional (QHP) before a service/procedure or product is provided.

6. Document the work performed: this should include work performed, indications/medical necessity, wound characteristics, instruments used, before and after, response to treatment, and other relevant information.

7. Document to ensure that claims are supported as billed: codes submitted on claims must align with documentation.
8. Be sure that all records are authenticated: documentation must include a legible signature, or if electronic, a protocol must be in place for electronic signatures.

9. Ensure that documentation supports quality measures that will be reported, including the patient experience: know the reporting specifications for each quality measure, select the measure carefully, and then document everything required.

10. Ensure that information is usable for scientific purposes; this is relevant for individual patient baseline and benchmarking, as well as evaluations across large patient populations.

Regardless of the health care setting, documentation that is accurate, detailed and timely is key to the effective treatment of wounds. Information that is documented as outlined above will meet all three criteria of the Triple Aim: improving the patient experience, improving patient outcomes and decreasing costs.

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Documentation is Key is an initiative from Gentell that aims to educate all those involved in patient care about the importance of proper wound documentation and danger of incorrect or insufficient documentation. Although much of the information concerns lawsuits, there is a human story behind every example of legal action. Proper documentation is essential to successful patient outcomes and improved healing rates. For more information, visit www.gentell.com/documentation.