

▶ CASE STUDY: Coding Technology

MedQuist's CodeRunner brings fast turnaround times with computer-assisted remote coding

SIERRA NEVADA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

(affiliate of Catholic Healthcare West)
Grass Valley, California

- 120-bed acute care community hospital
- 150,000 annual outpatient visits
- 30,000 annual ED visits
- 7,000 annual admissions

The Situation

- Facility located in remote rural location plagued by coder vacancies as well as high travel costs and high quality requirements.

The Solution

- Implement CodeRunner for facility, providing coders with a well-managed system to work efficiently from home while eliminating coding backlogs.

The Result

- Faster turnaround times
- Easy migration to home coding
- Highly experienced coders without travel costs
- No management headaches
- Proactive response to backlogs

The Benefits

- Increased coder productivity
- More funds allocated for core hospital needs
- Restored trust to remote coding technology

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital of Grass Valley, California, an affiliate of Catholic Healthcare West, was recently named one of the nation's "Top 100 Hospitals" by Solucient. Services include acute medical and surgical, emergency, rehabilitation, OB/GYN and outpatient care.

Coder Vacancies and High Travel Costs

In the spring of 2004, Denise Hunt, MS, RHIA, Manager of Medical Information Management, was faced with a coding nightmare. Her usual coding staff of four would be down to none because of vacations and leave. Hunt had heard about other remote coding systems, but was concerned about the time and resources they usually required. She also wanted her coders to work from home, but didn't have the time to recruit and train coders or manage a remote coding system.

Unlike metropolitan hospitals, Sierra Nevada Memorial was located in a rural area. And that meant outsourced coders and a huge spike in travel costs.

Thankfully, MedQuist was there to deliver the expertise they needed, without the debilitating travel costs that hindered workflow efficiency. And they're discovering record turnaround times along the way.

A Sensible Solution – One Step At A Time

Fortunately, Hunt didn't have to go far to find the solution to her coding dilemma. In fact, Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital had already chosen MedQuist as its transcription vendor. So when the time came to find a coding solution that fit the needs of Sierra Nevada, it was only natural to work with MedQuist and CodeRunner.

"MedQuist has always handled our transcription, so we decided to use their coding team as well," says Hunt. "I was impressed from the first day and I never thought it would be this easy."

But Sierra Nevada chose MedQuist and CodeRunner for more than just convenience. They knew that it was the one solution that could combine computer-assisted coding with remote coding and outsourced coding services. More importantly, it was the only solution guaranteed to deliver results.

And with all the tools in place, Sierra Nevada was ready to send their coders home with CodeRunner. "We wanted to get the system up and running using the outsourced coders first," explains Hunt. "Now that the system is running smoothly and the organization is comfortable with remote coding technology, the organization is ready for Phase II."

In Phase II, interfaces to the hospital's ADT and billing system will be built. "By using MedQuist's coders first, we were able to implement quickly, thoroughly test the system and verify our processes," she says. With a proven solution, she can now work with her Information

“
MedQuist coders work seven days a week, I don't have to pay their travel, and I can proactively prevent backlogs by sending records to them online.”

DENISE HUNT,
MANAGER OF MEDICAL
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT



Technology Department to get the interfaces built and proceed with Phase II – Sierra Nevada staff coders working at home.

Once they are working from home, Phase III will begin. In this phase, transcribed documents from the MedQuist system will be sent electronically to CodeRunner via a standard MedQuist interface. The computer-assisted coding technology will then “read” the information and present coders with suggested codes. Hunt’s coders will view a list of suggested codes for each case. They can approve those codes and send them directly to billing, or modify and edit them as needed. Thanks to CodeRunner, Sierra Nevada’s coders can eliminate coding backlogs by working efficiently from the convenience of their homes, and still be the fastest coders in the West.

Technology with Speed, Ease and Confidence

Now, all outpatient surgery and emergency department records are scanned and sent to MedQuist coders using CodeRunner. “After we scanned the records the first day, I went home and couldn’t wait to check the status,” she explains. From the time she left the office until she arrived home, 93 records had been coded and were ready for billing.

“I was astounded – the turnaround time is incredible,” she says. The technology won her confidence by delivering faster turnaround times than she had ever seen from an outsourced coding agency. What’s more, using MedQuist and CodeRunner eliminated management headaches and also put Sierra Nevada in a position to be proactive towards backlogs.

And with simple migration to home coding and significant cuts in costly travel expenses, Sierra Nevada began to reap the benefits of working with MedQuist’s powerful coding team.

Impeccable Quality With Fewer Headaches

Hunt wasn’t the only one impressed with the results. Her long-term coders wanted to see how the MedQuistcoders performed. “My coders have been at Sierra Nevada for many years and they were hesitant to trust an agency, much less agency coders using remote coding technology,” says Hunt. The coders went online to check MedQuist’s work.

“They were completely satisfied and we continue to see high-quality work, as we use CodeRunner for all our outpatient records,” she notes.

But what Hunt really enjoys about the new system is having access to high-quality, experienced coders without management headaches or travel costs. It not only restored her trust in remote coding technology, it dramatically increased the productivity of her coders while freeing up valuable funds for core hospital needs.



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