

CASE STUDY:

Prima CARE, P.C.

Multi-specialty provider group leverages care estimation solution to improve billing and improve collections

CHALLENGE

- Lack of estimates left patients in the dark about balances they owed and caused Prima CARE, P.C. to engage in balance billing practices after patients left the office.

SOLUTIONS

- Waystar® Care Estimator™ provides patient estimates before or at the time of service for high-end diagnostic tests.

RESULTS

- Prima CARE increased time-of-service payments by more than \$100,000 in just five months, improved price transparency and increased revenue cycle efficiencies.

Located in Massachusetts, multi-specialty provider group, Prima CARE, P.C. offers a comprehensive range of services for patients throughout southern coastal New England.

Feeling the pressure from skyrocketing patient deductibles in recent years, the group practice knew it needed to improve balance billing efficiencies as it serviced 120,000 patients across its 12 locations throughout the Fall River, Somerset, Tiverton, Westport and Dartmouth areas.

Existing processes did not allow patients to receive an estimate before services were rendered and meant they were billed only after their insurance company had paid a claim. The process left patients unclear on what portion of the bill they were responsible for, and resulted in a number of patients receiving high balances they didn't pay for, or which they paid slowly, sometimes taking up to a year to pay the balance down. This resulted in significant operational and administrative effort for staff, who expended time and money chasing down patients and sending multiple paper statements. In addition to affecting patient satisfaction and staff efficiency, the murky process also impacted AR days.

The organization's busy Central Diagnostic department was identified as one area that could directly benefit from the ability to provide patients with upfront estimates and improve the likelihood of collecting balances at the time services occurred. This included mammograms, bone density scans, MRIs and other high-end diagnostic screenings.

When it came time to search for an estimation tool, Prima CARE's established track record with Waystar, now known as Waystar, helped make the decision easy.

"We've been using Waystar® ClaimFlow™ since 2013 to good success, and quickly discovered Waystar Care Estimator was exactly what we were looking for," said Stephanie Pacheco, CPC, Billing Department Supervisor. "The ability to pull data directly from our Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA) with a high degree of accuracy was a strong motivating factor in our selection."

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The implementation process for the new estimator tool was simple. “A couple of phone calls, a review of the portal and some online and in-depth hands-on training was all it took to get us up and running,” said Pacheco.

Along with Implementation of the new tool, Prima CARE hired a revenue cycle specialist, who focuses on generating diagnostic services estimates for the central financial services department. After some initial workflow testing, the team landed on a highly efficient process where estimates are generated 24 hours prior to a patient’s appointment, and then the staff calls the patient to inform them of the approximate cost. When the patient arrives on site, they meet with a financial counselor and make arrangements to pay the bill then or set up a customized payment plan.

“Our goal is to collect 100% of the estimated balance the patient will owe up front. With a high-end service set such as diagnostics, we also provide patients the option to pay half of the estimated balance and set up a convenient and automated payment plan with us. That process is managed by obtaining authorization to keep and use credit card information on file,” added Pacheco.

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In the roughly five months the estimation has been in use, the central billing team has collected around \$100,000 upfront from patients at time of service. The staff appreciates how easy and user-friendly it is to use Waystar Care Estimator and how quickly it has helped streamline the billing process.

“When we collect balances up front, we don’t have to send out bills, which saves us both staff time and associated hard costs such as paper and postage,” said Pacheco. “And since our estimates form has space to include old balances, we’re better able to collect those, as well. Patients appreciate the consolidated process.”

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Patients also benefit from better price transparency for diagnostic services and the ability to make informed decision upfront on when to have the service performed and how they will pay for their balances.

“Where before we saw frustration from patients around unknown costs, today, we have a clear process that gives patients the information they need. Based on this, we’ve found that patients may occasionally delay their tests until they have ability to pay upfront which helps reduce bad debt,” added Pacheco.

Building on the success of the Central Diagnostic department, Prima CARE will roll out Waystar Care Estimator to other departments next, including the Cardiac Testing Lab, the Infusion Center and the organization’s Sleep Disorders Center.

“Waystar Care Estimator will quickly pay for itself. And it’s so easy to use — anybody can do this.”

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