Dermatology Coding Alert

Don't Settle: Perform an MPM Needs Analysis

Review these system features and decide which ones your practice needs.

When your practice decides to invest in a medical practice management (MPM) software system, the most important issue is to find the right product for your practice. If you determine that more than one system could work for your office, you'll then want to weigh the costs and the benefits of each type. Use this list to see what important features you should consider.

- **Open architecture.** This means that you want an MPM software program that allows you to interface with other software, such as electronic medical records software. It also means that you're not limited to purchasing all of your practice's software needs from your MPM vendor. Carefully consider the cost involved for future interfacing you want to do with your system before you purchase a certain product.
- **Ability to incorporate new technology.** You should ensure that your MPM software is capable of incorporating new technologies as they emerge, such as the ability to securely e-mail patients' appointment reminders.
- **Accounts receivable follow-up and management.** A good MPM software system will allow you to follow up and manage your accounts receivable (A/R) in an efficient way and to ensure claims don't fall through the gaps, rather than simply being a claim launching system.
- **Auto-posting.** This feature enables you to grab electronic remittance so clean claims are automatically posted from Medicare and private payers, which is a major labor-saving feature for your office staff.
- **Privacy and compliance assurance.** Consider selecting a system that creates HIPAA-compliant claims without having to go through a clearinghouse ⸺ you should be able to go directly to the payer with the claim.
- **Ease of use.** The system should allow you to move quickly from screen to screen and should not seem to be convoluted and difficult to navigate. Also, if most of the other programs your office uses are Windows-based, consider selecting a Windows-based MPM system so that it's easier to work between programs.
- **Collection tools.** Computer-aided collections, as well as automated collection warnings for appointment schedulers, provide more effective management and tracking of patient and payer collection issues.
- **EOB scanning.** The ability to scan in your explanations of benefits (EOBs) is another feature that can come in handy and improve your office's efficiency.
- **Reliable backup system.** If you lose all of your data during an emergency or power outage, your MPM software won't do you a bit of good. Test the backup system, ask questions such as how the information can be restored and how quickly it can be restored, and consider off-site storage of the backups.
- **Security.** Ensure that the software program you choose has the capability of password protection and that you can control the password and security settings rather than the vendor. Security levels are important in order to control what information people can have access to.
- **Perpetual license.** Make sure the contract you sign doesn't mean that you don't have a right to the software after the contract is up. Never buy software that will stop working at a certain time/date.
- **Good reporting.** Many software programs can produce a multitude of reports, but they are only worth something if they are reports that your office needs and will use. Make sure the system you choose can produce the reports your staff needs to do their jobs. Also look for the ability to create your own customer reports.