

Eli's Rehab Report

Compliance: Perfect Your Practice's Medical Records With Regular Peer Reviews

Make reviews a team activity to keep everyone on same page.

Therapists know they should be conducting peer reviews of patients' medical records, but everything else isn't as clear. Use this peer review primer to ensure your practice's procedures are inline with national standards:

What should we review?

Your peer reviews should include the information that came to you with the patient, including the physician order and initial plan of care certified by the physician's signature, says **Lori Libolt, OTR/L with ReBound Physical, Occupational, and Hand Therapies** in Lynden, Wash.

Then move on to the evaluation information that you've collected during treatment. Subjective information pertaining to the patient diagnosis, quantifiable and objective information, the treatment plan and its parameters, the duration and frequency of visits, any goals you've established for the patient, daily progress notes, and discharge summaries are all included under this umbrella.

When should we review?

Scheduling peer reviews can be a challenge, so practices should develop a procedure that works best for them. "We use provider meetings to do our peer reviews together," Libolt says. This helps us get on the same page while completing our form as well as helps us clarify records' specifics" such as the treatment goals and documentation needed to complete the chart.

However, many practices set a peer review goal and leave it up to the therapists to hammer out when and where the review will happen.

How often should we review?

Each practice can set its own rules about the frequency of peer reviews. "Each of our therapists is required to do four peer reviews each month," shares **Jill Piazza, PT, DPT**, Director of Sports Medicine and Rehab at **Florida Hospital DeLand**.

Best practice: Peer reviews should be conducted at least quarterly, Libolt says. Conducting the reviews more regularly will benefit your practice but you aren't required to do so.

Why should we review?

Besides your regulatory obligations, peer reviews are a great tool for your practice and the therapists working in it, Piazza points out. "Our documentation is more thorough, complete, and accurate," she says, and "it supports the charges we've billed."

Peer reviews have also "empowered our staff to give open and honest feedback to each other and helped educate everyone one what's required and expected from their daily work," Piazza says.

Through peer reviews therapists see what they're doing well, what they need to improve, and how their performance directly impacts patient care, Libolt asserts. By reviewing the charts, each therapist has the chance to visualize how patients flow from the first treatment date to the last.



The bottom line: The more time and energy your practice puts into peer reviews, the better your patient outcomes will be. Focus on thorough, consistent reviews to keep your practice -- and your patients -- on track.