

Outpatient Facility Coding Alert

Reader Question: Going Mad Managing Inventory? It Might Be Time To Automate

Question: I manage a large ophthalmic ASC, and every month it seems like I spend more and more of my time managing inventory. It's becoming too much—we recently even had to reschedule a case because the patient's choice of premium IOLs wasn't in our stock. We are thinking of investing in an automated inventory management system. What do you recommend?

Virginia Subscriber

Answer: Inventory management has a significant effect on an ASC's financial health. Any efficiency you can implement in supply costs will show up directly in your center's bottom line. A data-based approach to inventory management is essential to realizing significant cost savings, but many surgery centers—like yours—still rely on paper and manual processes. "Centers that don't employ the right technology to track and analyze inventory data have a much harder time identifying opportunities to lower supply costs, eliminate waste, and reduce staff time involved in the inventory process," says **Chad Camac, vice president of sales at ManagementPlus**. Below, Camac details a few things to look out when vetting an automated system:

- **Specialty-specific** □ (for single-specialty centers)
- **Web-based/wireless capability** □ Connectivity with your primary suppliers is a bonus.
- **User-friendly interface** □ If the system isn't relatively simple and intuitive, it will be tough to get staff buy-in.
- **Affordability** □ Systems with a subscription can be more affordable versus one that requires a large capital outlay.
- **Accuracy** □ Even an error rate as small as 5 percent could result in significant financial and material waste.
- **Real-time tracking and charge capture** □ Auditing your inventory once a month isn't enough. Real-time updates help you maintain optimal supply levels, prevent revenue from falling through the cracks, and ensures soon-to-be expired products are used first.
- **Analytics** □ Analysis of trending data is essential to identifying opportunities for savings.