

## Outpatient Facility Coding Alert

### Reader Question: To Allocate Your Technology Dollars, Stick to a Strategy

**Question:** The administration at our center is finally working on a strategic plan, but we can't agree when it comes to bringing the technology at our center up to date. What should we be focusing on to keep our center competitive now and into the future?

Tech-challenged in Iowa

**Answer:** You're off to a great start. Thinking about IT during the strategic planning process is the key to making sure that often-limited dollars are used in the ways that will best benefit the growth and success of your facility. But it's important to remember that "tech alone is not a strategy," according to **Ashley Wise, MBA** who spoke to ASC administrators about technology at the ASCA 2017 Annual Meeting in May.

Even for the non-tech savvy, it's all too easy to get caught up in the bells and whistles of programs that promise to make running your facility easier. But remember: investing in IT is much more complicated than a fancy new program or shiny tablet. "When you implement [a program] you are tripling and even quadrupling the number of devices you're supporting... [and] there are capital expenditures beyond the IT solution you need to consider," notes Wise.

If you're having trouble prioritizing where those capital expenditures should be directed, try working through these three categories as a group, Wise recommends:

#### Category 1: What Must I Do?

- Compliance
- Security
- Keep your core systems operational
- Support your current business scale and scope

#### Category 2: What Should I Do?

- Minimize risk to operations and finances
- Support growth
- Upgrade current IT to latest versions
- Track cost and quality

#### Category 3: What Would I Like to Do?

- Improve patient satisfaction
- Improve provider experience
- Share data with healthcare partners
- Improve quality and reduce costs
- Build and use analytics for process improvement

Solutions that fall within category 1 are a higher priority than those within category 2 or 3. For example, one administrator might be enthralled with a patient portal he or she just demoed, confident that it will boost patient satisfaction scores (category 3). But in reality, "patient engagement is different in an ASC than [in] the physician's office," says Wise. The ASC is just one small point on a patient's care journey; the ASC isn't involved in the majority of their healthcare, because that relationship is with their surgeon, their doctors, or the health system, she continues. So

"how much engagement do patients really want with the ASC," she asks.

Figure out where each of your competing IT initiatives fits within these categories-the framework will help you choose the right solutions at the right time. "Every IT investment should be founded upon well-defined strategies and operational goals," Wise notes. "By working through each of these categories, your facility should be able to identify and prioritize its IT investments."