



Northern Colorado Therapy Services

Improving Productivity and Patient Care

Speech and Occupational Therapy

For Michelle Underhill, MA, CCC-SLP, entering the working world of speech therapy was fulfilling yet frustrating. She was helping others with a full range of communication, cognitive and swallowing difficulties in various settings when the harsh reality hit that healthcare is a business.

She soon learned that productivity equated to billable hours. Michelle remembered struggling with days when the patient needed her to focus on something other than the modalities listed for the day's session. But, with the expectation to be a "highly productive" employee, this was not always possible.

Michelle started to evaluate her current job and goals for her future. While treating patients, she discovered her passion for those with Parkinson's Disease, which spurred a desire to specialize. In 2015, she opened Northern Colorado Therapy Services and ventured into the world of solo practitioner.

Challenge: Billing, Regulations and Staff Efficiency

Starting her own practice, Michelle was confident in her skill as a speech therapist and her ability to serve her client population well. The intimidating part of the business venture was running the back office and billing side of her practice.

Michelle faced common challenges for independent providers who possess big goals and minimal staff. Staying on top of her billing practices was a scary thought. She worried about productivity, time management and timely billing. There is an art to understanding billable services and implementing daily practices that allow clinicians to optimize their billable time. This is where she turned to Kareo's practice management solution.

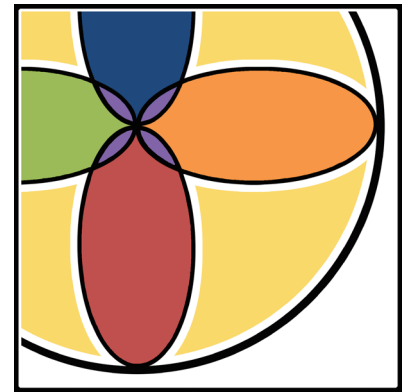
Solutions: Creating a Culture of Timeliness

"My onboarding specialist with Kareo gave me the best advice—bill at the end of every day," said Michelle. By setting a personal culture of timeliness, Michelle is now able to process 10-15 claims per day while delivering the highest quality of care to her patients.

Kareo Solution



KAREO BILLING



**NORTHERN COLORADO
THERAPY SERVICES, LLC**

"One of the greatest things about Kareo is that they find my errors and teach me how to not make that mistake again. They scrub the claims before they ever go to Medicare and know what will and won't pass. And, they even help identify underpayments to ensure I get the most out of every visit."

A process she once feared is now easy. As her business grows, this culture of timeliness is fostered with new staff. Michelle offered this advice: “If daily billing is not a doable expectation in your practice, just select a timeframe and stick to it.”

Every therapist completes their notes, assessments and modalities a bit differently, she continues. This is what makes each person unique in their practice. But in order to be efficient, there must be set processes and expectations. A significant portion of Michelle’s success with billing practices is related to point of care documentation and the culture of her company.

One mistake many practitioners make is documenting at the end of the day. This habit creates a chunk of non-billable time. A good practice is to document at the point of care. Collaborate with the patient while you document. Assess progress towards goals, provide education and create a new treatment plan with the patient. “The key to this practice is collaboration,” she says. The patient must be involved in this process in order to be billable.

Running a business with few staff members is challenging. Michelle is the owner, clinician, biller and a multitude of other roles. She knew from the beginning that she would not succeed without goals and planning her time efficiently.

She estimates that for every 1 hour she spends with a patient, it takes an additional 1½ hours to complete documentation, send the bill and receive payment. This planning allows her to be productive, efficient and deliver the highest quality of care.

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The billing experts at Kareo allowed her to become her own biller with ease. If she has questions, she simply turns to the staff at Kareo who specialize in payer reimbursement analysis.

Results: Higher Productivity and Better Patient Care

Productivity doesn’t have to be a dirty word. Using a metric derived from the number of patients divided by hours worked, Michelle can review her practice’s productivity data and see positive results.

In 2016, with two full-time therapists, she and her staff were 34% productive, compared to 80% productivity reached in 2018 for the same period. This is a 46% increase in productivity which adds to her culture of timeliness in both the clinical and billings parts of her practice.

In 2016, Michelle’s practice had an average days revenue outstanding of 34 days. Today, she is down to an average of 22 days! As a result of implementing the right tools and processes, as her clinical productivity increased, her billing time decreased.

Conclusion

The reality of today’s healthcare system required Michelle to be aware of billable hours as part of her success metric. She created consistent practices and partnered with the right software vendor so that she could be productive while delivering high-quality therapy care to her patients.



22 Days

Average A/R



46%

Increase in
Productivity



10-15

Claims processed
each day