



Case study—ADVOCATE

Optimizing day-to-day operations

ADVOCATE Radiology Billing and Reimbursement Specialists is a specialty-specific reimbursement services organization. ADVOCATE provides a broad range of managed billing services to radiology practices and imaging centers.

Headquartered in Powell, Ohio, ADVOCATE offers clients an operational infrastructure that is focused on reimbursement, claims processing and compliance. Led by chief executive officer Kirk Reinitz, ADVOCATE serves 50 radiology clients nationwide and currently employs 205 full-time and part-time staff members. ADVOCATE, founded in 1998, processes more than 5 million records annually.

With its seasoned staff of professionals, ADVOCATE focuses on addressing the unique needs of today's practicing radiology physicians and offers a diverse range of talent to deliver exemplary client support. ADVOCATE maintains a simple but direct goal – pursuing perfection in the science of radiology reimbursement. The organization prides itself on being an early adopter of new technologies to produce consistently superior revenue results for its clients.

A consistently strong organization, ADVOCATE has grown considerably throughout its 11 years. In 2004, the ADVOCATE team found it was facing increased staffing costs and overtime hours to keep up with its coding workload and client demands. The coding staff suffered low morale and burnout, while the leadership team grappled with the costs of the overtime, recruiting and staff turnover.

The ADVOCATE team decided the time was right to pursue computer-assisted

coding (CAC). ADVOCATE sought a solution that would improve coder productivity and capacity, reduce denials, strengthen compliance, improve coding outcomes, eliminate its backlog and reduce turnaround time.

The CodeRyte solution

ADVOCATE evaluated the field of CAC vendors and quickly decided on CodeRyte after preliminary testing showed the company's technology improved coding quality by almost 11 percent, Reinitz said.

CodeRyte is the nation's fastest growing provider of computer-assisted coding solutions for the healthcare industry. Through natural language processing, CodeRyte's engine applies evidence-based criteria to identify correct billing codes from clinical information in radiologists' reports with statistical precision. Context and confidence anchor the technology, which easily navigates subtle language nuances such as negation, context and time references in the medical record.

ADVOCATE now processes more than 5 million radiology reports annually and has been a CodeRyte client since May 2005. CodeRyte's technology was able to quickly address ADVOCATE'S needs – improving coder productivity, turnaround time, coder outcomes and compliance while reducing denials and backlog.

"The radiology billing industry is in transition and CodeRyte understands the direction the industry is headed," Reinitz said. "Its technology and products are not only beneficial for coding accuracy and cost effectiveness, but also for electronic workflow maximization and scalability."

Key benefits

- ◆ Improved coding quality by almost 11 percent
- ◆ Tripled coder productivity
- ◆ Eliminated 8 open positions as well as 9 coding and data entry positions
- ◆ Reduced turnaround time by 60 percent and denials by 8 percent
- ◆ Reduced the revenue cycle by 5 percent

ADVOCATE

- ◆ Headquartered in Powell, Ohio
- ◆ Serves 50 radiology clients nationwide
- ◆ Employs 205 full-time and part-time staff members
- ◆ Codes more than 5M reports annually
- ◆ CPU billing system



Across-the-board benefits

CodeRyte tripled ADVOCATE's coding staff productivity. The organization once averaged 50 reports per hour and now averages more than 150 reports per hour. The efficiency gains allowed ADVOCATE to eliminate 8 open positions as well as 9 coding and data entry positions. All of the staffing changes were achieved through attrition and reassignment, with coders transferring their skills to AR reduction.

CodeRyte revolutionized how ADVOCATE managed its coding staff. Prior to CodeRyte, ADVOCATE relied on labor-intensive spreadsheets to manually track the work of 25 full-time coders. Edits to the coders' work were done by hand as well, eating away at managers' time. The manual approach to data management was exhausting and often incomplete, Reinitz said.

"Reporting was inconsistent from office to office, manager to manager," he said. "The manual process introduced subjectivity at a low level. We can manage the process now, which we couldn't before. Now we can measure everything."

CodeRyte's cost-effective, easy-to-operate system also helped ADVOCATE cast out its mass of paper and, at the same time, achieve new levels of denial management and turnaround time. ADVOCATE quickly eliminated coder overtime costs and decreased its average days in AR by almost five percent.

"The production consistency is a major benefit of CodeRyte," Reinitz said. "We've had a 60-percent decrease in turnaround time and now turn things around in only 24 hours."

Partnering with CodeRyte additionally helped ADVOCATE reduce coding-related denials by 8 percent and stave off many coding errors that are intrinsic with human coding. These kinds of errors would make it through ADVOCATE's manual system, but they no longer occur with CodeRyte.

Reinitz believes ADVOCATE provides more compliant codes with CodeRyte's automated LCD and CCI edits, concurrent auditing and

related reports routing. He also credits the technology with finding additional procedures in the text of the medical record that human coders might have missed, adding to ADVOCATE's appropriate reimbursement capture.

"We apply the rules more consistently now," Reinitz said.

Correct-To-Bill™ savings

CodeRyte sorts reports processed through its engine into three queues for ADVOCATE, based on the statistical confidence of codes generated for each specific report. Each note is subjected to rigorous analysis and is compared with the millions the engine has processed before to determine its accuracy. Those with the highest degree of confidence are sent Correct-To-Bill™.

CodeRyte's Correct-To-Bill approach applies multiple elements of technology and statistical analysis to code medical reports accurately. CodeRyte's team worked hand in hand with ADVOCATE to analyze the organization's confident coding outcomes and determine what could be sent straight to its CPU billing system based on its compliance policy.

With the organized queue system, ADVOCATE discovered another benefit of the CodeRyte system: simple, efficient auditing and QA. CodeRyte's automated QA helps ADVOCATE assure coders are accurately applying the appropriate ICD-9 and CPT code for every procedure that is performed. CodeRyte's auditing tools offer ADVOCATE insight into their operations and help fine tune coding through clearly defined and documented coding standards; real-time, prospective audit capabilities; and inter-coder agreement measurements.

"CodeRyte substantially improved our coding quality," Reinitz said. "It has also improved our workflow consistency and given us added flexibility, such as the ability to have our coders sub-specialize in their coding expertise. All this has allowed us to raise the bar for our quality standards resulting in improved revenue cycle times and revenue capture for our clients."

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ADVOCATE Radiology Billing
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