

Findings

The Tech Issue

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Summer 2017



Business Intelligence.... Are You Using it?

Business Intelligence software, also called BI software, is software that is designed to analyze business data to better understand an organization's strengths and weaknesses. Business intelligence software allows an organization's management to better see the relationship between different data for better decision-making and optimal deployment of resources. Business Intelligence software plays a key role in the strategic planning process of the corporation.

With business intelligence on the cusp of breaking through to mainstream implementation in health-care organizations, now is the time understand how BI can impact practice and clinical operations.

Nearly half of healthcare IT executives and medical staff report having currently implemented or acquired a Business Intelligence system, according to survey results released in June 2017 by staffing and services firm TEKsystems.

BI technology is being used most prevalently in finance (by 76 percent of respondents), operations (71 percent) and clinical care (71 percent), respondents said, with 53 percent expecting it to be widely used for compliance.

Analytics and reporting.

Business intelligence analytics and reporting tools can assist providers with the data needed to implement effective ways to identify, measure, and monitor quality of care. The reporting capabilities assist with complying with industry standards as well as meaningful use, ICD-10, and ACOs.

Clinical data analysis

Healthcare BI software can track and monitor all clinical activities to help providers identify trends and their most efficient areas. Physicians can diagnose and prescribe more efficiently, which leads to improved medical outcomes. BI software can help healthcare organizations meet and monitor their quality measures such as meaningful use, ACOs and health information exchanges.

Findings

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Financial analysis

Look to BI software to provide a range of financial capabilities, including: income and cash flow, debt to asset ratios, and denial management. Additionally, BI software has a history of cutting costs, particularly in a hospital setting.

Facilities that implemented BI software reduced the average number of days in getting billing submitted to the insurer from 6 to 2½ days.

Implementation of Business Intelligence software can also accelerate reimbursement. In one test case BI software generated cash flow benefits of more than \$4 million in improved cash flow.



Bonus Articles on The Web

Hiring the RIGHT Practice Manager



Performance Review in a Digital Age



BI software can provide a single platform for healthcare providers to share information with their patients and improve medical decision outcomes and evidence-based clinical decision-making, and foster seamless patient care across all medical departments.

Electing to utilize the software allows providers to forecast patient diagnoses and administer efficient treatments, while reducing the average wait times. From this mass of information, business intelligence tools can generate key insights to improve patient outcomes, cut expenses, and analyze treatment plans and drug effectiveness.

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Emerging Trends In Healthcare

The past few years have been tumultuous for most health care organizations as payment models, competition, regulatory changes, clinical advances, digital and information technology, and workforce trends have created the need for rapid transformation in just about every area of health care delivery and management. Layer on top of that uncertainty about the future of the Affordable Care Act, and 2017 should be another watershed year for health care.

The health care industry has undergone significant change, and much of that change has stemmed from what was once the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and resultant influx of millions of patients into the health care system who formerly didn't have access to health care. In addition, the aging baby boomers have contributed to this increased demand for health care services.

The supply of physicians has not been able to keep up with the demands from these patients, hence the increased number of nurse practitioner (NP) and physician assistant (PA) programs in medical schools, as well as the increased hiring of NPs and PAs nationwide. U.S. News & World Report has ranked NPs and PAs as the number 2 and 3 best jobs to have in 2017. Specifically within the spine care profession, more patients with spinal deformity, herniated disc, or low back pain are seeking care, and physicians who are accepting of ACA Marketplace insurance are seeing a higher volume of patients.

In order to counteract this increase, these physicians are using physician extenders—NPs and PAs—more often.

Reducing Costs

Hospitals in general have experienced relatively stable financial performance over the past year or two — for some, even better than expected. In many cases, this has been a function of fairly strong volume, particularly in

outpatient services. But the marketplace is putting pressure on payers — and thereby providers — to further reduce costs.

With higher employment rates, coupled with expanded coverage for individuals through the ACA, yet continued primary care shortages, emergency department volume is high. This can put pressure on inpatient capacity, operating room schedules and care management resources.

Pressure to reduce costs because of lower rate increases from payers means that managing patient flow efficiently, and reducing variation through defined workflows and clinical protocols are both critically important for a health system if it wants to achieve or maintain financial sustainability. Ensuring that precious resources like hospital beds and operating rooms are optimally utilized is also important to avoid making potentially unnecessary capital outlays for new bed towers or surgery centers. Some leading hospitals are exploring capacity-command centers that combine systems-engineering principles, commonly seen in complex industries such as aviation and power, with predictive analytics to manage and optimize patient flow, safety and experience.



It also is critical that the health system physician enterprise, which in most cases operates at a loss, optimizes physician time and aligns compensation models with goals and population health strategies, as well as engages in rigorous clinical performance management.

Technology

With the explosion of mobile technology, and applications for home and self-monitoring, not to mention the expansion of urgent care and retail care centers, 2017 will be another year of evolving care models. Private equity-backed as well as employer-backed new models for primary care and complex care, and digital tools will continue to proliferate. Health systems will have to decide

whether to partner, adopt or compete with these new entities and models.

Telemedicine will be used increasingly not only for remote rural areas but for the convenience of consumers who would prefer not to leave their home or office for care. This means competition could come from anywhere accessible by smartphone. Home and self-monitoring will be used to help make care for the elderly and other patients with complex conditions more responsive, as well as avoid costly hospitalizations.

Evidence-Based Recruiting

In the past, spine practices, like many other practices, recruited talent by word of mouth or by placing an advertisement. However, candidates are now less likely to respond to ads, and trends in recruitment methodology show that a more active approach of reaching out to candidates via a phone call or social media is preferred in order to recruit the best talent possible.



In the past, physicians would interview a candidate in their office and say, “I’ve got a good instinct or good feeling about this person.” They might not go through the appropriate screening processes or methodology needed to make sure that the candidate is the right hire, such as

checking references, running a background check, doing a panel interview, and having other staff in the office meet the candidate.

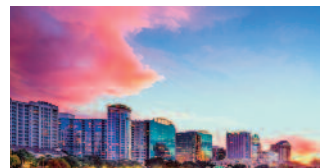
With evidence-based recruiting, the employer needs to consider what the candidate’s salary is going to be and compare it against benchmark data of what salaries are nationwide. In addition, the employer needs to define the training period and orientation, and what types of benefits, mentorship, career growth, promotion guidelines, and strategic incentives will be offered to the candidate.

Furthermore, the employer should define the desired skills and behavioral competencies needed to fulfill the job description, and may choose to use behavioral assessments, which are highly correlated with job performance.

Events



October 22-24, 2017
Association of Academic Surgical Administrators
Hilton San Diego Bayfront
1 Park Blvd
San Diego, California



October 25-28, 2017
2017 NASS Annual Meeting
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, FL



October 26-29, 2017
7th Annual Pain Meeting
NYSIPP
Jersey City, New Jersey

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Does Your Practice Need a Makeover?

If an office presents an unappealing or uncomfortable environment for both patients and employees it can contribute to reduced productivity, or even a decline in new patients. If your office hasn't been updated in a while, it may be time for an extreme medical office makeover.

There are two broad areas of concern in the design of a practice facility: appearance and functionality. Dated furniture, paint color and décor can make patients judge your practice based on appearance. They may be thinking if the office isn't update then what else isn't updated. They might think you have an outdated computer system or outdated medical equipment. Now, that may not be true but an office's appearance can make a nervous patient make judgements.

See Like a Patient

How can you make your office more comfortable for patients? Try to bring nature indoors by using natural materials, such as wood, stone, copper and plants. Bring natural light into the waiting room by installing large windows and skylights. If that's not possible, use track, recessed or pendant lights for a softer feel. Harsh lighting may increase a patient's anxiety.



There are easy updates you could make like changing the paint color or replace wallpaper with paint in well-chosen

neutral colors rather than traditional sterile white. Plan on painting the office every five years or when there is noticeable wear and tear. This is also the case for office furniture; you should regularly clean or reupholster furniture. No patient wants to sit in a waiting room or exam room that has dirty or broken furniture. Sometimes it is easy to lose track of these things because the office is so busy. The practice manager should take inventory once a month of repairs or things that need to be cleaned.

Try to see the office through the eyes of your patients. Ask them about the physical arrangement and office decor, and how it makes them feel. Imagine a practice setting so appealing that patients look forward to visiting because they "feel so good there." It's not impossible.

A poor office design can create functional problems such as poor traffic flow, cramped working areas, and chronic inaccessibility to supplies or equipment. But a good design can make the workplace more efficient — and more satisfying for employees.



One way is to repurpose underused space and get rid of underused equipment. For example, if doctors are focusing on patient care, private physician offices will be rarely used and should be considered for conversion to more productive purposes. Similarly, if ancillary equipment isn't earning sufficient revenues, the space and cost should be replaced with something providing more value.

Accessibility to supplies is critical.

Another way to enhance office flow is to improve access to supplies and equipment. A good rule of thumb is that those that doctors regularly use should be located based on what's most efficient for them.

Finally, if your office currently assigns each physician a specific personal exam room, stop that practice. It's an unaffordable luxury. Create generic exam rooms that can be used by any physician. To enhance the utility and supply accessibility of exam rooms, each room should have an identical layout and stock of supplies.

4 Innovative Marketing Techniques for Your Medical Practice

1. Creating an Amazing Medical Practice Website

Physician practices of all sizes and specialties rarely maximize the impact they could have with a well executed website. However, having a great website for your practice is imperative for getting new patients. Putting money towards an amazing website will provide multiple benefits to your practice. The more visible you are online, the more chances there are for a new patient to see your website and use your practice. Referred patients search for and visit your website to see if they're comfortable with your practice; if your website is professional looking it shows that you have invested in your practice and patients like that.

If you have an existing website that is more than 3 years old, it's near certain that it is dated both visually and technically. More than 50% of potential patients will be visiting your site using a mobile phone or tablet. If your site doesn't work on a phone, you just said goodbye to someone.



2. Use email to interact regularly with your patients

Email marketing is one of the best ways to remind people to come by for regular checkups. You can schedule follow-up emails for 4-6 months after each appointment to ensure they drop by your office for biannual checkups. You can also update people throughout the year with tooth care tips, news, and updates about your business. You'll find it's surprisingly easy to jump start your email marketing with email management providers like Constant Contact or MailChimp.

3. Your website should provide visitors with immediately useful information

Helpful links to information and forms extend user sessions (time on the website) as they interact with the practice online. Downloads, images, and quizzes have the same effect. By offering a diverse range of useful material, we also provide an incentive for current patients and prospective patients to return to the website.

Google weighs returning users, time on site, and pages viewed in its search algorithms, and this sends a strong quality signal to Google that enhances the likelihood of a favorable position in the search engine results page.

4. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Texting

Keeping a steady flow of patients coming through the door is critical for any medical practice. While there are a variety of marketing tools available to a practice, it is a simple fact that a complete digital strategy is the model for marketing in 2017. If you don't have one, establish a Facebook presence and encourage your patients and peers to interact with you. Post news, ideas, and other items of interest to the public. You are building a relationship.



Use Twitter and Texting to reach out to patients. Twitter can allow you to create a following of well-educated professionals and increase your "authority" on the Internet. Almost all professional medical associations have a Twitter presence. Your profile on LinkedIn will often appear in Google search results. A well prepared profile reassures and encourages patients. Texting is rapidly supplanting email for many uses. Consider the power of a quick text to a post-surgical patient that offers a tip, a reminder, or simply asks how they're doing.

SpineSearch Sightings



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