



# MEDICAL MANAGER

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Quality Records</i>	2
<i>Purpose of Audit</i>	2
<i>Planning an Audit</i>	2
<i>Conducting Audit</i>	3
<i>Applying Results</i>	3
<i>Applying Results</i>	3
<i>Review</i>	4

### Helpful Online Info

Visit the following websites for good information on chart auditing.

- Duke University Medical Center:  
[http://patientsafetyed.ahs.duke.edu/module\\_b/module\\_overview.html](http://patientsafetyed.ahs.duke.edu/module_b/module_overview.html)
- E-how:  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2110561\\_audit-healthcare-claims.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2110561_audit-healthcare-claims.html)
- A helpful chart audit worksheet: [www.paraprogram.org/ChartAuditWorksheet/MedicalSpecialists.pdf](http://www.paraprogram.org/ChartAuditWorksheet/MedicalSpecialists.pdf)
- MedScape:  
<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/579287>
- MD Alliance Billing, LLC:  
[www.mdalliancebilling.com](http://www.mdalliancebilling.com)

## AUDITING MEDICAL CHARTS

Physician's offices are busy places, and often it takes everything you and your staff have just to get through the day seeing patients, booking appointments, and dealing with endless paperwork requirements. Keeping careful records of visits and procedures may get put on the back burner on occasion. Errors and omissions are not uncommon, but they may be costing your office more than you realize. What can you do?

Auditing medical charts is the first step and a critical part of any successful medical office operation.

The process of auditing your medical charts can help you determine how well your records are being kept and what needs to be improved. A detailed chart audit can reveal errors that, when corrected, could improve your office's day to day operations, im-

prove the quality of service to patients, and bring in increased revenue.

This issue of "Medical Manager" will focus on the items every medical chart should include and how to go about conducting an effective and informative audit. We will discuss reasons for conducting chart audits, how to plan for and conduct an audit, and how the information gained from the auditing process might be used to improve your business.

Now more than ever, the importance of auditing medical charts is clear. As the deadline requirement for all medical records to be electronic nears, practices will have to have their charts organized and ready for digitization. A comprehensive audit is crucial for a successful EMR system to be implemented with current patient records. If you are already using EMR, auditing your electronic charts can help you determine the success of your EMR implementation



and discover ways to improve it's use. The old saying of "what you don't know won't hurt you" does not apply to your medical records. Make sure you know what's in there, and don't hesitate to call **MD Alliance Billing, LLC** if we can help you in the process!

Stay cool this summer!  
Cloe Sill  
President

## CALL MD ALLIANCE BILLING, LLC FOR HELP

Does the thought of auditing your charts send you running for the panic button? Don't worry—**MD Alliance Billing, LLC**, can help you through the process of chart auditing. We offer comprehensive practice management including

chart auditing, billing and coding, human resource organization, and more. You can visit our website just by clicking on the "Panic" button to your right! Let us help you today!



*“There are certain elements that every medical chart should include for proper evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of patients.”*

## WHAT ARE QUALITY RECORDS?



There are certain elements that every medical chart should include for proper evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of patients. They can be separated into three main areas—history, examination, and medical decision making.

- History should include a description of symptoms, history of the present illness, a review of systems, and past personal medical history, family medical history, and social history.
- Examination should be problem focused, detailed, and comprehensive including all body areas and organ systems.
- Medical Decision Making documents diagnosis and management options, amount and complexity of data, and the risk of complications.

In addition, each patient encounter documented should

include the reason for the visit, relevant history, exam findings and test results, assessment and diagnosis, plan for care, and info on identity of the observer. All medical records should be neat, legible, and complete. Proper documentation at the start can help you easily provide insurance companies with required documentation to help you get paid more and faster. Making sure you have proper medical record keeping procedures can also make the job of chart auditing much easier

## PURPOSE OF CHART AUDITING

*“Ultimately, the purpose of any chart audit is quality improvement.”*

The main purpose of a chart audit is to allow physicians to check performance, determine how things are going, and identify areas that are doing well and those that need improvement. Your chart audit can focus on many different aspects, depending upon the kind of

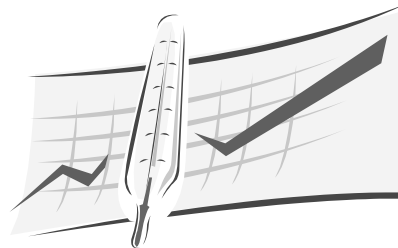
information you are looking for—compliance, billing and coding issues, administrative procedures, clinical information, research—the list goes on and on. Anything that is regularly documented in the medical record can be the subject of an audit. Ultimately, the purpose of any chart audit is quality improvement.



## PLANNING A CHART AUDIT

*“The more focused your audit, the better and more useful information it will yield.”*

The first thing to consider in planning for chart audit is deciding who will conduct the audit. It should be an unbiased third party who is not involved in your day to day operations. However, it does need to be someone with extensive knowledge of the medical field familiar with billing and coding procedures and medical terminology. Next, you need to choose carefully what elements you want



reviewed. If the purpose of your audit is to track the quality of your record keeping, then you should choose an

element of information that you would expect to see in all charts and track how often it is utilized or omitted. If financial information is your goal, you would be focusing on payments received for certain codes or from certain payers across your patients. The more focused your audit, the better and more useful information it will yield.

## CONDUCTING THE AUDIT

- Select your topic—clear, not too broad or narrow, measurable using info in charts
- Identify measures—what constitutes an acceptable record for that topic
- Identify the patient population—the focus may help define this, but you will also need exclusion and inclusion measures
- Determine sample size—10% of eligible charts is a good rule of thumb, 50 to 100 charts can be a good size for many practices.
- Create your audit tools—make sure they are clear and simple, use a spreadsheet or a paper worksheet if your auditors are more comfortable with that
- Collect the data—fill out audit tool comprehensively for each chart selected, but be sure to leave out patient personal information
- Summarize results—consider what topics you are measuring and how to report the data in a meaningful way
- Analyze and apply the results—compare results to local and national benchmarks, taking into account any differences in your population



*“Make sure your auditor is familiar with current fee schedules and up to date ICD-9 and CPT coding procedures.”*

## APPLYING THE RESULTS



Since the main goal in

chart auditing is to determine problem areas for improvement, the main use of your results will be to improve the quality of your practice. This will include determining the source of the errors, fixing the problem, retraining staff, if necessary, and making new guidelines, pro-

cedures, and requirements known to all employees of your practice. If an issue is discovered but no changes are made to prevent the problems from occurring again, then no real progress has been made by conducting the audit. Set a performance goal for your staff and make it a part of a quality improvement initiative.

*“Set a performance goal for your staff and make it part of a quality initiative.”*

### Medical Manager Minute

**NEWS!!** Our website has changed! Please make note of our new website address:

[www.mdalliancebilling.com](http://www.mdalliancebilling.com)

We invite to visit our site or email Cloe at [www.cloe@mdalliancebilling.com](mailto:www.cloe@mdalliancebilling.com)

## APPLYING THE RESULTS, PART II

If your audit is specifically for tracking financial information about claims processing, it is critical to determine if the results show consistently incorrect billing or just the occasional mistake. Also, it is important to determine whether these mistakes resulted in underpayment or overpayment. The payer should be contacted in either situation and the correct information provided so



that the actual costs and payments due can be determined. Medical billing fraud is major

concern for patients, physicians, and insurance payers. As a responsible professional it is your duty to make sure any unintentional mistakes are corrected and any intentional inflation of billing is stopped immediately. A careful audit can both protect you and provide you with improved processes that can bring in more cash.

**MD Alliance Billing,  
LLC**

Cloe Sill, President  
710 Mockingbird Lane  
Kerrville, TX 78028

Phone: 830-257-2590  
Fax: 830-257-1070  
E-mail:  
cloe@mdalliancebilling.com



*"Your Practice Management Specialist"*

Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5

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## REVIEW

- Auditing your medical charts can help you determine how effective your record keeping and billing practices are currently what areas need improvement.
- A quality medical record includes comprehensive information about patient history, examination, and medical decision making.
- The ultimate purpose of chart auditing is quality improvement.
- Things to consider when planning a chart audit include who will conduct your audit and what elements you want to focus on.
- Steps for conducting an audit are:



1. Selecting your topic
2. Identifying your measures
3. Identifying your patient population
4. Determining sample size
5. Creating your audit tools
6. Collecting the data
7. Summarizing results
8. Analyzing and applying those results in a meaningful way



- Since the main goal of chart auditing is improvement, results must be applied by creating quality initiatives that will insure improvement in the areas of focus

If the concept of chart auditing is a bit overwhelming to you, do not hesitate to contact us at [MD Alliance Billing, LLC](http://MDAllianceBilling.com). We can help you follow the steps to conduct a chart audit that will benefit your practice (and your pocket book). What you don't know will hurt you, so call us today and we can help you gather the information you need to make sure your practice is running smoothly, efficiently, and effectively.