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Tackling the challenges faced by Physicians while treating Geriatrics by Jacob Thomas

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The Challenges in Geriatric Medicine

The projected population of geriatrics is about 19.7 percent of the total population by the year 2030, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In light of such projections, it becomes clear that physicians and health care providers are definitely going to face growing number of elderly patients in their line of work in the near future. However, geriatric medicine faces numerous challenges that range from core care issues to pecuniary concerns. Here are some of the major problems faced by physicians and geriatricians and some possible solutions to these problems.

Medicare Cuts

The looming Medicare cuts to cover the Federal deficit are one of the major concerns for physicians and for the elderly population in the country. The cuts that are scheduled to take place in January 2012 can be postponed again but are inevitable in the near future. The combination of Medicare cuts along with the increasing population of baby boomers and the elderly in the country means that many physicians would be forced to drop Medicare patients. Although the solution to the problem of Medicare cuts is not yet clear, what is clear is that these cuts are definitely going to impact the elderly population in the country and providersâ€™ revenue in the near future.

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Baby Boomers

Baby boomers form a major segment of the people who need geriatric care in the country and according to the U.S Census Bureau, 18% of the population in the country is above 60 years of age. By the year 2030, the total population of the country is going to increase by almost 68% bringing immense pressure resources, including health care and geriatric medicine. The scarcity of medical students who choose to practice geriatrics is another added problem that can exacerbate the hurdles faced by the elderly and by physicians in the future. The fact that geriatrics as a profession is not even mentioned in the Bureau of Labor Statisticsâ€™ website bears witness to the fact that there is a huge scarcity of dedicated geriatric physicians in the country.

Reimbursement Issues & Geriatrics

Achieving meaningful use in geriatric medicine is one of the complex issues that are faced by physicians treating elderly patients and geriatricians. The American Geriatric Society has submitted a letter to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding the problems faced by geriatricians when it comes to Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) and Electronic Health Records (EHRs). Low reimbursement has been cited as the biggest barrier to building the geriatrician supply. Hurdles mentioned mostly arise due to the fact that most of the elderly patients have multiple chronic conditions and the type of care provided is unique and not traditional in nature. According to American Geriatrics Society efforts are being made to improve geriatrics training for medical students but not as much is taking place for practicing physicians. Physicians caring for frail older patients need support from other professionals.

Possible Solutions

The complexities of geriatric health care delivery have made it difficult for physicians to treat elderly people successfully and at the same time comply with the health reform guidelines. Although there are no quick-fix solutions to the above mentioned problems, there are some ways in which the whole process of adoption of Health IT can be made easier. Some of these include taking assistance from professionals who are experienced and knowledgeable in the Health IT sector, improving back-office services such as medical billing and coding, taking assistance from consultancy services, improving denial management, and optimizing the revenue cycle management processes. These services can certainly assist physicians and providers to increase their margins and revenues.

For more information about challenges in geriatric medicine, Health It reforms, consultancy, denial management, revenue cycle management, successful adoption of EMR and EHR, and better medical billing and coding services, please visit medicalbillersandcoders.com the largest consortium of medical billing and coding services in the United States.

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