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healthcare financial management association
metropolitan new york chapter

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NEWSCAST

DECEMBER 2008 – FEBRUARY 2009

VOLUME 42 NUMBER 3

HOW TO SAVE MONEY, REVERSE DENIED CLAIMS, AND ENSURE YOUR INSTITUTION'S LONGEVITY DURING THE BERGER COMMISSION ERA

First, New York State hospitals were confronted by a wave of complicated, ever-changing regulations governing Medicare and Medicaid billing—yielding administrative headaches, denied claims, and wasted man-hours. More recently, something equally troublesome has been affecting the average hospital or institution's administration: the release of New York State's Berger Commission. The Commission called for the closure of nine hospitals statewide, and continues to hold serious ramifications for many others, particularly since other commissions and regulations loom on the horizon. Recently, however, a small (but growing) wave of tech- and business-savvy medical billing and software firms has been helping those hospitals and clinics targeted by the Commission and the state's seemingly never-ending push to close or consolidate hospitals.

Released in 2005, The Berger Commission called for the closure of nine hospitals across New York State and the conversion, affiliation, or reconfiguration of another 48 hospitals. In all, about 25% of all New York State hospitals were directly affected by the recommendations, with more to come. Unfortunately, in the meantime, Medicare and Medicaid have been denying more and more claims—

leaving hospitals to rely on taxpayer dollars to carry the load (a precarious situation, at best.) In the interim, the Berger Commission's recommendations are guiding the state to attempt closure of additional, financially-strapped hospitals. These recommendations have even trickled down to senior citizen homes, and other smaller institutions.

However, some hospitals have discovered an alternative to being trampled by the Commission's aftermath. There now exists software programs and technology that can empower hospitals to better receive payments and reduce denied claims. These firms provide services that use various software programs that can process claims and denials—usually going back several years—resulting in potential extra revenue; recovering claims that were thought to be lost forever. Perhaps most importantly, these advancements counter the Berger Commission by letting hospitals know that merging with other healthcare providers—or worse yet, closing—are not the only alternatives.

Hospitals statewide are beginning to consider these services. They find them powerful and easy-to-use: well-suited for today's overall economic climate. The software is usually inexpensive, allowing facilities to maximize revenue with minimal billing staff. Web-based and accessible from anywhere, there is little overhead involved. Additionally, most require no server, further reducing costs. These new software packages have detailed reporting capabilities, providing CFOs with complete reports analyzing the source of their denials: this critical feature allows deci-

sion-makers to analyze their processes, allowing them to act on in-house inefficiencies. Additionally, these products are now recommended by several leading accounting/law firms, and independent auditors.

Just about every kind of healthcare institution has been impacted by the Berger Commission—and likewise, can be aided by these new technologies. Several of the new software packages are approved for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), primary care centers (Article 28), ambulatory surgery centers, mental health facilities (Article 31), substance abuse facilities (822), OMRDD facilities, and foster care agencies.

Sol Weiss, CEO at (516) 374-4530 or visit www.Millinmedical.com. Millin Medical is a member organization of HFMA, CHCANYS, The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of NY State, and other accredited organizations. Firms like Millin are allowing hospitals and clinics to recover lost revenue and make their facilities sustainable, a powerful tool for hospitals and clinics already stressed to the breaking point due to the Berger Commission's ramifications.

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The Metro NY HFMA Chapter does not recommend any specific vendor to provide any of the above services and provides this as informational only.