
Risk Pearls: April 2017

By Julie Loomis, RN, JD

Spring has sprung, which means spring cleaning for many of us. It may also be a good time to retool your office tracking procedures, as diagnostic error accounts for one-third of SVMIC's paid claims. Tracking system failures are a primary factor in diagnostic error. Maintaining a system within each office site for tracking lab and diagnostic test results, referred patients, hospital discharges and missed appointments is essential to avoiding delays in diagnosis and/or treatment. A patient may fall through the cracks if your office fails to act upon an abnormal test result or a missed appointment. Review your tracking procedures to ensure your method best fits your practice. The type of system chosen will depend largely on the nature of the practice and your choice of medical records (paper or EHR). Tracking procedures should be simple, organized, and consistently used by all staff and providers in the practice. Staff should be trained and accountable for accurately maintaining the system and alerting providers when expected results are not received. Remember, tracking is only part of the equation for proper procedure management. Appropriate patient communication and documentation is also necessary for the prevention of missed or delayed diagnoses.

The contents of The Sentinel are intended for educational/informational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice. Policyholders are urged to consult with their personal attorney for legal advice, as specific legal requirements may vary from state to state and/or change over time.