5th Annual Health IT Industry Outlook Survey

Survey indicates healthcare providers need experienced support to comply with MACRA and IT demands

Introduction

Healthcare professionals representing a full spectrum of provider facilities, including health systems, standalone hospitals, physician practices and other ambulatory care facilities, participated in Stoltenberg Consulting’s Fifth Annual Health IT Industry Outlook Survey conducted at HIMSS17. IT professionals (53%) led survey participation, while executive/C-suite representation followed closely behind (42%).

Limited resources
Lack of budget (44%) and lack of qualified, experienced job candidates to fill health IT positions (43%) were closely cited as the top reasons why healthcare organizations are not fully staffed in their IT departments.

HIT staff in short supply
54% of respondents said finding qualified health IT staff and support is “difficult,” while 28% of survey participants reported it as “very difficult.”

Not ready
64% of respondents reported they were “unprepared” or “very unprepared” for managing and executing MACRA initiatives.

Make MACRA a team effort
68% of respondents said preparation for complying with the Medicare Access and Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (MACRA) Quality Payment Program (QPP) should be a combined effort across clinical, financial and IT departments.

Top MACRA challenges
31% of respondents reported “revising data management/reporting mechanisms to meet new reporting requirements,” as the top QPP challenge. That obstacle was nearly even with “motivating the entire organization to collectively work together to achieve goals” (29%).

To check out last year’s results, visit: http://www2.stoltenberg.com/2016-HIT-Industry-Outlook-Survey
Key Takeaways

Here are four key tips to help organizations who may be facing the same challenges as the survey participants.

1. Healthcare IT staff must possess unique skill set
One reason healthcare organizations may struggle to find qualified IT candidates is because staff are often required to have a wide range of skills spanning clinical, financial and operational aspects of organizations. This desired skill set is not obtainable from pure academics, but rather a result of successful IT and clinical work experience. Despite this challenge, organizations should continue to seek professionals with demonstrated critical thinking, creative problem solving, and strong collaboration and communication skills across multidisciplinary teams.

With experienced and knowledgeable support combined with teamwork, organizations can conquer budget, staffing and operational challenges to achieve enterprise-wide success in MACRA's QPP or any value-based care goal.

2. Invest in training and support
Instead of only recruiting new staff, healthcare organizations could develop their own qualified IT staff by investing in focused training for high-potential, less experienced employees, while seek advisors who can offer insight and training. Experts can also offer IT project guidance across the full continuum of care from both a financial and clinical perspective, which will also develop staff skills and experience with knowledge transfer.

3. Team-approach for MACRA success
MACRA replaces the old sustainable growth-rate (SGR) formula for physician payment, transitioning focus from fee-for-service to value-based care. It aims to streamline and increase provider accountability for quality outcomes and cost reduction. Successful MACRA QPP reporting will take more than just passive submission of claim data, which was the primary mechanism of the programs it is replacing. MACRA QPP success requires a defined, focused team which includes IT, clinical and operational departments all led by an executive representative. By combining their expertise, team members can better capture, maintain and analyze data that demonstrates program requirement achievement maximizing reimbursement opportunity.

4. Create a MACRA QPP roadmap
The first step for this multidisciplinary team is to acquire a solid understanding of MACRA QPP. With this foundation, the team can more effectively assess reporting mechanisms and identify where reporting gaps occur and how those will be mitigated. The team should then create a multi-year roadmap including alternative QPP path considerations that indicate the potential impact on reimbursement. A roadmap will allow a healthcare organization to quickly adapt its MACRA program from year to year, preparing for more stringent requirements in future reporting years or transition from one reporting path to another.

For more information, call 412-854-5688 or visit www.stoltenberg.com