

CASE STUDY

Novant Health

KEY PLAYERS

SmarterPrebill

 NOVANT
HEALTHSamara Llewellyn, MD
Senior Physician ExecutiveElisa Sninchak, MBA, MEd,
BSN, RN, CCDS, CDIP, CCS
Director of Clinical
Documentation Excellence

Challenge

As a bedside nurse-turned-clinical documentation specialist, Elisa Sninchak has a wide range of clinical experience and coding expertise. So, when AI became the talk of the healthcare town, the Senior Director of Clinical Documentation Excellence for Novant Health and their physician partner, Dr. Samara Llewellyn, knew there was a way it could augment the impact of their clinical documentation integrity (CDI) team.

The field of CDI has gotten exponentially more complex in recent years. In the not-so-distant past (about 20 years ago), a clinical documentation specialist's job was already a tough one — knowing the ins and outs of 13,000 diagnostic codes, 3,000 procedure codes, and 10 CMS quality measures was par for the course. But, fast forward to present day and those numbers have increased dramatically. Want to stay on track now? It'll mean that more than 156,000 ICD-10 codes and over 100 CMS quality measures need to be top of mind, all the time.

"The growing complexity of CDI over the last couple of decades is becoming nearly impossible to manage," said Sninchak. "Moving from hundreds to tens of thousands of codes, even with the investments you've already made, you still have challenges. That's certainly the position we were in."

"Our team is empowered. They are spending more time clinically validating diagnoses at risk for denial and addressing high-impact documentation opportunities."

– Elisa Sninchak

Solution

While the Novant Health team was excited about the possibilities inherent in AI, they found that many of the solutions simply grouped Novant Health's list of cases. But those workflows didn't offer the precision or efficiency needed. With 30,000 data points per patient chart, it was challenging for the CDI team to consistently review every single one. Starting with the charts that an algorithm deemed most important still meant leaving documentation opportunities on the table.

So, Dr. Llewellyn and Sninchak came up with a plan.

"I was interested in AI, but knew we needed a solution to match our advanced CDI program's approach and focus on quality and patient safety," Dr. Llewellyn said. "Elisa and I spent three years developing a wish list — we learned by evaluating how different solutions could fit within our program strategy and goals."

That wish list of questions came in handy when Novant Health encountered Smarter Technologies. Novant Health's CDI team learned that SmarterPrebill™ — the company's flagship clinical AI offering — could automatically analyze all 30,000 data points in the patient chart and pinpoint missing diagnoses, even those that weren't documented by the clinician. Instead of doing this work manually, Novant Health's CDI team could now focus on reviewing and validating clinical findings.

And that last bit was of utmost importance to the team.

"Our team is empowered," shared Sninchak. "They are doing less sifting through data and spending more time clinically validating diagnoses at risk for denial and addressing high-impact documentation opportunities."

Results

As documenting patient care has become more complex, having a tool that can augment the CDI team's ability to search everything in the patient chart has become critical for Novant Health. The health system completed an eight-week long go-live with SmarterPrebill, ensuring that the clinical AI solution was available across their 15 different sites.

Novant Health implemented the technology in late 2024. The amount of net new revenue they are capturing today is more than double that of when they first implemented SmarterPrebill.

And the success isn't just in the financials. SmarterPrebill helps the team increase their quality risk variable capture across the system by allowing 100% of all inpatient discharges to be evaluated. It also expands on the work that the team had already been focused on — advancing their clinical knowledge and engaging providers in continuous learning about the importance of accurate, thorough documentation.

"The team was already doing a great job," explains Sninchak. "AI just helped us get even better."

And Smarter Technologies is proud to be part of Novant's tremendous success. Prior to the addition of SmarterPrebill, the Leapfrog Group awarded nine of Novant Health's 11 participating facilities with an "A" Hospital Safety Grade for the Fall 2024 scoring period — the most "A" grades of any health system in North Carolina. That includes seven facilities recognized with the elite "Straight A" designation for earning "As" in at least five consecutive cycles of the Hospital Safety Grade.

And as Sninchak says, "Implementation of AI can create a level of fear and uncertainty. A successful partnership to tailor the product to your organization's needs is essential to achieving a remarkable AI support process and impact."

Checklist for success:

Asking the hard questions

What Novant Health asked potential AI vendors

- What are the query agreement rates for your suggested opportunities?
- Do you have other organizations using your solutions that we can meet with?
- Is there the ability to tailor filters and opportunities over time?
- What does the training of end users look like — specifically the timeline and follow-up abilities.
- What is the financial timeline or expected contract commitment?
- What is the impact on the workflows of the physicians and the CDS team?
- How accurate has your ROI been with your existing customers?
- Do you provide physician and APP education to gain buy-in?

> 2x the projected net new revenue captured for Novant Health

What's next

After their success with SmarterPrebill, Novant Health's CDI team was keen to learn more about how Smarter Technologies' clinical AI platform could further help them across their institutions. They're currently exploring additional uses for AI solutions, such as streamlining the clinical claims denial process and expanding AI's billing reach to other stages of the revenue cycle. Plus, they have plans to further expand SmarterPrebill across additional sites in the Novant Health network.



To learn more about how Smarter Technologies' clinical AI platform can help your health system, visit: smartertech.com/solutions/smarterprebill