

Faces Behind-the-Scenes Profile...

Nancy Greif:

Experience, Knowledge, and Attention to Detail Make this Reimbursement Veteran a True Asset

Imagine what you can learn in 20 years. Now imagine that you spend each of your days navigating a sea of meticulous details, such as reimbursement codes, definitions, filing requirements, and other contract terms—all of which have a dramatic impact on your organization's bottom line. Mistakes quickly snowball, revenue can be lost, and the ground rules are constantly changing.

Understandably, some people are cut out for a job like this and some are not. Nancy Greif, Reimbursement Specialist for CarePro Home Health/Option Care in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is not only cut out for it, she thrives on it! With 21 years in home infusion reimbursement, Greif has acquired a breadth and depth of knowledge that make her an indispensable resource to others in her organization—two of whom took the time to

bring her skills and contributions to our attention.

"Nancy has seen a lot of changes in the payer world and our industry—and she knows our company history," explains Shari Mailander, R.N., C.C.M., Chief Operations Officer at CarePro. "She is a true asset to our organization."

It's not just what Greif knows, but how she applies it that makes her the "go to" person for a variety of significant tasks from updating payer contracts in the information system, to training other staff members, to pulling reports and helping with financial forecasting and strategic decision making. "She knows so much and is able to connect the dots," continues Gale Porter, CarePro's Reimbursement Manager. "Nancy's got a great sense for when something doesn't sound right. Because she's inquisi-



Nancy Greif, Reimbursement Specialist for CarePro Home Health/Option Care in Cedar Rapids, Iowa

tive and a bit of a perfectionist, she'll dig deeper to get the answer and take the initiative to fix it so the problem doesn't escalate."

Porter describes it as, "the right combination of having the light bulb go off in her head and then taking the initiative to follow up on it." On more than one occasion, that combination has made Greif the bearer of bad news, she adds. "But that's OK. She sets a great example and helps reinforce that, in our department, staff shouldn't feel threat-

Editor's Note: Alternate-site infusion providers are on a continuous journey towards achieving excellence. A path of quality care, paved with many examples of leadership and commitment—some highly visible, some not as readily apparent (but, nonetheless, deeply rooted and vitally important). Beyond the unmistakable center-stage roles played by home infusion pharmacists and nurses within our field, perhaps the most unexpected treasures for us all to discover and explore can be found in the stories of the skilled employees that work behind the scenes to make a home infusion company successful—the devoted "faces behind-the-scenes."

Could your business thrive without the knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the personnel in the warehouse, the technicians, intake staff, dieticians, drivers and other critical individuals who display the passion and caring for the patient through the work they do everyday? NHIA plans to utilize this periodic INFUSION department to better recognize and examine these indispensable faces behind-the-scenes!

ened, they should feel a sense of accountability, and show a desire to do things right the first time.”

Greif’s colleagues rely on her to get things right the first time. That’s why she’s typically responsible for entering new payer contract terms into the massive database and computer program used to generate each claim. “There are hundreds of variables that need to be specified, and the person who is entering them really has to understand the nuts and bolts,” explains Porter. “If you do it wrong, you’re billing the wrong amount—which can result in underpayments or denials—and booking revenue that may not be collectable.” Because their organization generates so many claims per day, she says, a programming error could be multiplied many times before it’s detected. “Nancy understands this and doesn’t let that happen.”

She also helps to prevent mistakes on the front end of the reimbursement process by actively collaborating with the intake staff. For example, CarePro has a payer that is gradually transitioning medications from the major medical benefit to the drug card benefit. “Every month, Nancy will go through patient records, pull all those with drug cards, and circle back with the intake people so they can re-verify coverage,” Porter observes.

Clearly, if the coverage has changed, the intake team needs to make an adjustment—either verify and enter the new coverage or make arrangements for the patient to pay. Without this critical step, CarePro could be providing services that it would later have trouble getting paid for. “She has a lot of knowledge about the insurance plans and their requirements, so she ends up helping the intake staff quite a bit, teaching them how to

set up patients and helping them understand the benefit structure of the plans,” Porter continues.

Greif’s skills, however, go beyond simple attention to detail. She’s also adept at analyzing all the various data points and drawing conclusions about the organization’s profitability. “When we have new payer contracts, she can go into the system and pull reports that let us know which drugs or services will be paid below cost,” says Porter. “In many cases, we’ve gone back to the payer and renegotiated based on her analysis.”

According to Mailander, this ability to understand how changes will affect the bottom line is a vital tool in strategic planning. “We draw on her expertise when we’re considering new service lines,” she explains. “The first step in any decision making process like that is to run it by Nancy and get some projections. With margins as thin as they are these days, there’s not a lot of room for error, so the information she provides is essential.”

Reliable projections were critical in the aftermath of the recent lawsuits surrounding AWP (average wholesale price), Mailander adds. “We were forced to live with reduced reimbursement until those contracts were changed,” she recalls. “Nancy helped us look at what drugs were affected and do some budget forecasting so we knew what to expect and could take steps to deal with it.”

Greif is incredibly resourceful, continues Porter. “We have to comply with so many requirements in

order to get paid. There are a lot of hoops to jump through and it takes a very detail-oriented person to understand each process and know what needs to be in place,” she explains. In many cases, Greif’s past experience is enough, but if she doesn’t have the answer, she can find it. “All the information is online, and Nancy is really skilled at searching around and finding what we need.”

As the industry evolves and payer-provider relationships change, so do the steps required for successfully submitting claims and collecting reimbursement. “Nancy knows that procedures are a constantly moving target for new people as they try to understand,” says Porter. “She’s helped train a lot of people.”

Overall, Porter says Greif’s influence has helped build a reimbursement team with a healthy mixture of trust and respect for one another. “They’re all willing to look at the process for ways to improve.”

A recent example is the team’s drive to convert as many processes and functions to an electronic format as possible. “As a result, they took six days off our DSO (days sales outstanding), which has freed up cash flow,” reports Mailander.

A dedicated team, mentality paired with the deep knowledge that comes from years of focused and committed experience, is a highly effective combination, concludes Mailander. “In the sheer number of years Nancy has worked here, she has really built a niche specializing in home infusion billing. That’s an incredible resource to our reimbursement team and to our business.” ■

Who’s working “behind-the-scenes” to make your organization great?

Share your stories and help us celebrate—and learn from—the unsung heroes of the alternate-site infusion community. Contact INFUSION Editor Jeannie Counce at jeannie.counce@nhia.org or 406-522-7222. To read more Faces Behind-the-Scenes profiles, go to www.nhia.org/fbts.