

Session 3 Issue-Spotting Exercise

HotButtons, Inc. is an IT consulting firm that specializes in the design, implementation and customization of EMRs in academic medical centers around the country. Joe is a professional informaticist and a Senior Consultant at HotButtons. Joe is starting Year 2 working on-site as Project Manager at the Chicago University Medical Center (CUMC).

Yesterday, at a regular status update meeting with CUMC executives, the CFO went on at length about how CUMC's Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements had been dropping precipitously and he blamed the salaried hospital staff physicians for failing to fully document the medical record, thus leading to under-coding and under-reimbursement for CUMC.

Therefore, to incentivize physicians to focus more on better patient record-keeping and raise reimbursements, the CFO requested that Joe customize the billing system embedded in the new EMR so that the EMR tracks every time a physician codes a level of care higher than called for in certain selected kinds of cases. Joe's challenge is to figure out how to do that. The CFO proposes to roll out a new program to the medical staff to reward those staff with another \$250 added to their end-of-year bonus for each patient they code that way.

This morning, Joe attended a meeting requested by the VP of Marketing/Media Relations, and the Director of Patient Safety at CUMC. They outlined to Joe how CUMC was getting increasingly bad press in the local and national media because the organization had a downward trendline in various public healthcare Report Cards showing CUMC's quality of care was now well-below the national average for academic medical centers.

They asked you to help CUMC score higher on future such Report Cards by customizing several physician order forms in the EMR, including the following:

- 1) On the Emergency Department Admitting Form: If the ED physician notes any cardiac symptoms (e.g. checks "YES" in the box asking about chest pains), the EMR will automatically check the boxes asking whether aspirin and a beta blocker were administered; and
- 2) On all CUMC inpatient Admission Forms, the EMR will automatically check "YES" in the box indicating that the patient had smoking cessation counseling from a nurse.

If Joe goes ahead and customizes the hospital's EMR system, as requested at these 2 meetings, discuss the various legal, ethical and social issues that CUMC will face as a consequence of those changes to its EMR.