Higher costs for patients mean more headaches for your practice

As health care costs keep rising, health care plans share these increased costs with their members in the form of higher premiums, copayments and deductibles. In addition, the growth of unemployment, self-employment, and consumer-directed health care plans (CDHPs) means that more individuals are shouldering the burden of health care costs themselves.

For health care providers, this means an increasing proportion of their revenue is being derived from direct payments by their patients. In fact, patient receipts now account for 19 percent of the average practice’s accounts receivable.1

But practices run into problems when it comes to collecting self-pay payments. Statistics show that for medical practices, self-pay collections are a source of rising concern due to increasing costs, demands on staff time and lost revenue. For example:

- 81% of self-pay net revenues go unrecovered2
- practices carry about 18% in bad debt from uncollected deductibles3
- self-payers default at a rate of 30% or more4
- it can cost twice as much to collect from a patient as it does from a payer5

We can help cure the headaches

Collecting self-pay balances requires consistent policies and procedures—and a tremendous amount of staff time. athenahealth, with our array of services and support, takes a lot of this work off your hands. For example, the Self-Pay Reminder Service and Patient Portal components of athenaCommunicator® help your practice make self-pay collections more efficient and effective.

With athenaCommunicator services:

- you never pay for another paper statement again
- we create and mail paper statements on your behalf, at our expense
- we help you guide patients to your Patient Portal where they can receive financial updates and make payments electronically
- we initiate a reminder service that delivers a series of phone calls, text messages, emails and electronic “soft” collection letters at key moments in the self-pay revenue cycle to ensure rapid, secure payment

In addition, athenahealth’s Credit Card Plus service lets your practice process all credit card payments directly through athenaNet® with the easy swipe of a credit card. Office staff no longer need to process cards on a stand-alone device or website and then record the payment

“The Self-Pay functionality is great in itself, and the way athenaCommunicator and Self-Pay work together, integrated into our workflow, is even better. It helps us to perform better, makes us more productive, and contributes to the growth of our practice.”

– Phyllis Buries, billing manager at Deerpath Primary Care

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4. Ibid.
To learn more about how athenahealth can help your practice, visit www.athenahealth.com or call 866.817.5738.

Our Card-on-File tool can cut DAR and costs
This payment collection tool in Credit Card Plus (CCP) can dramatically reduce your days in accounts receivable and drive down costs. Similar to how hotels put guest credit cards “on file,” CCP allows your practice to get pre-authorization to bill patient credit cards after the insurer processes their claim.

You can:
- automatically bill the patient by sending an email notification, charge the credit card, and send a follow-up receipt
- give your patients the flexibility and comfort level they need by setting the limit for what they can be billed
- securely store patient credit card information to pay future balances
- establish automatic payment plans to collect those large balances that many patients may find difficult to pay in a single transaction
- use athenaNet to put a patient’s credit card information “on file” with our partner Elavon, one of the world’s leaders in electronic payment processing

Helping you collect self-pay payments throughout the workflow

- Provide patient portal to communicate self-pay policy, post anticipated co-pay amounts, and take payments
- Enable insurance card scanning
- Enable processing of payments via credit, HSA/FSA cards, and checks
- Enable secure storage of credit card information to pay future balances
- Enable creation of automatic credit card payment schedules
- Provide scripts to help staff collect co-pays, deductibles, and previous balances
- Provide access to real time adjudication for accurate payments
- Enable processing of credit card, HSA/FSA card, and checks
- Enable secure storage of credit card information to pay future balances
- Enable creation of automatic credit card payment schedules
- Provide portal to accept payment, deliver summarized EOB and statement
- Provide 2 automated follow-up calls every statement cycle
- Provide 2 automated follow-up emails every statement cycle
- Provide live operator services for after-hours bill payment
- Mail up to 4 printed statements if needed

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separately into a software application. Office staff use a desktop check scanner and athenaNet to deposit check payments without leaving their desks. With a quick check scan, athenahealth immediately verifies the check validity and availability of funds (when possible) before the patient leaves the office, so you can be confident that you are receiving full and prompt payment.