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GUIDE

A Practical Guide to Clinician Engagement in Risk Adjustment

(+Decision-Making Tree)

You have the possibility to engage clinicians and improve RAF scores—without the headaches.

Let's be real: getting clinicians to care about HCC coding and risk adjustment can feel like herding cats. They're busy, focused on patient care, and don't love documentation. But here's the thing: **accurate HCC coding isn't just an admin task; it's a game-changer for patient outcomes.**

If clinicians aren't engaged, risk adjustment scores (RAF) take a hit, reimbursements suffer, and, most importantly, patients might not get the care they need. So, how do we turn things around? Let's break it down into simple, actionable steps.

Why Aren't Clinicians Engaging?

Before jumping to solutions, we must figure out why clinicians aren't playing ball. Some common reasons:

They don't see the value "Why does coding even matter for patient care?"	**They're overwhelmed** "I barely have time to see my patients, let alone code every little detail!"	**They don't know how** "I did not know that diagnosis was not specific enough."
They think the system is flawed "This just feels like a way for payers to make money."	**They don't get rewarded for it** "If this does not change how I am caring for my patients, why should I care?"	

Each of these issues needs a different approach. That's where this decision-making guide comes in.

Top 3 Strategies to Fix Engagement Issues

1. Make It About the Patients, Not Just Paperwork

Instead of leading with "this helps with reimbursement," flip the script: "**Accurate documentation helps us predict and prevent hospitalizations.**" Show them real-world examples where better documentation led to better care.

And always make clear that, when documentation accurately captures a patient's true health status; it can directly impact care decisions. For example, If a clinician documents **stable angina** instead of just **chest pain**, a care team member handling a patient call might recognize the need for heightened vigilance, knowing that angina could indicate a higher risk of heart attack.

Similarly, documenting **chronic bronchitis** rather than a **chronic cough** could prompt a covering clinician in an urgent care setting to take a more proactive approach to a suspected respiratory infection. These precise diagnoses help care teams anticipate complications, tailor treatment plans, and improve patient outcomes.

2. Give Them Small, Digestible Training Nuggets

Here's the hard truth you have to face: Nobody wants to sit through a two-hour coding seminar.

Clinicians simply don't have the time for them. Instead, break training into smaller, more manageable pieces. Offer short videos that highlight key documentation strategies in under five minutes. Use quick quizzes to reinforce best practices without being time-consuming. Monthly tip sheets can also serve as handy references that clinicians can glance at when they need guidance on common documentation challenges.

Another thing you can apply is focusing on high-impact areas, such as adequately coding for conditions like diabetes, depression, or COPD. This way, you ensure the training is immediately helpful and relevant to their daily workflow.

3. Reinforce, Remind, Repeat

Engagement doesn't happen overnight; even well-trained clinicians can forget best practices if not continuously reinforced. Establish a consistent cadence of reminders to keep documentation accuracy in mind. Weekly emails featuring a "Quick Tip of the Week" can provide ongoing education in a format that's easy to digest.

Additionally, monthly check-ins can be used to review common documentation errors from the past month, helping to correct mistakes before they become habits. Peer mentorship is another effective strategy. Pairing clinicians well-versed in the HCC model with those still learning builds a supportive environment that encourages growth and improvement.

When learning is continuous and part of a clinician's routine, they are far more likely to stay engaged and committed to proper documentation.

Aligning Clinical Teams with RAF Accuracy Goals

The first step for any manager looking to align their clinical team's efforts with RAF accuracy goals is identifying the specific problem. If engagement is the issue, managers must understand whether it stems from a lack of awareness, skepticism, or workflow inefficiencies.

If the challenge is more specific—such as clinicians rejecting a guideline for a particular condition—the solution might require targeted training or a case study session led by a medical director to reinforce best practices.

Identifying the issue typically involves some basic data analysis. Are clinicians under-documenting across the board, or only in certain areas? Are there technical issues, such as software failing to identify relevant conditions? Is the problem related to record retrieval or screening? Another key factor is ensuring that clinicians are actually using available tools.

If they aren't opening software or engaging with coding assistants, that's a clear sign of an adoption issue that needs addressing.

To address low clinician engagement, a manager should focus on three core initiatives:

First, **they should reinforce the why**—helping clinicians see how their documentation efforts directly impact patient care and long-term health outcomes.

Second, **implementing an incentive system can be highly effective** if your organization allows it. For compliance, we recommend the incentive structure to focus on rewarding accuracy and thoroughness.

Finally, **regular reinforcement is key**. Whether through weekly guideline refreshers, monthly case study discussions, or quick check-ins, ongoing reminders help maintain engagement and ensure sustained improvements in documentation quality.

Final Thoughts: Keep It Simple, Keep It Consistent

Getting clinicians engaged in HCC coding isn't about overwhelming them with rules and regulations. It's about making sure they see the connection between **what they do** and **how it improves patient care** (while keeping the doors open for financial sustainability).

By taking a structured but flexible approach that meets clinicians where they are, you can transform disengagement into active participation.

Ready to put this into action? Discover how a technology-driven approach can simplify clinician engagement and improve RAF accuracy. **Schedule a DoctusTech demo today,** and let's make accurate HCC coding effortless and impactful. **Let's get started!**

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Practical Exercise: Uncover the Root Cause of Resistance

Are clinicians documenting conditions thoroughly?

❌ **No**

✅ **Yes** → Congratulations! Just remember to provide a refresher training on what needs to be documented and why.

Do they understand why HCC coding matters?

❌ **No** → Make sure to educate clinicians on how accurate coding leads to better patient care, and fewer hospitalizations. It's important to highlight the why behind your initiatives. If necessary, bring in clinical leaders that your clinicians respect to explain the why in a way that connects to patient care.

✅ **Yes** → **Do they struggle with time management for documentation?**

❌ **No** → **Are they skeptical about the system?**

✅ **Yes** → **Consider adding scribes, AI documentation support, or optimizing EMR templates.**

Are they skeptical about the system?

✅ **Yes**

❌ **No**

Are they incentivized in any way?

✅ **Yes** → Make sure incentives are structured around compliance

❌ **No** → Consider introducing incentives that reward accurate documentation.