



Get Out of the “Basement”

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As a cardiovascular administrator, I have accountability for the performance of all aspects of the cardiovascular continuum of care. As a former exercise physiologist, I understand the high-value, high-quality work that is done in cardiac and pulmonary rehab programs. Most of my administrator colleagues have not had that experience, so it is imperative that you articulate the critical elements that affect the business of rehab programs.

As my good friend Ash Walker would say, “You have to get your rehab program out of the basement of your hospital.” He doesn’t suggest physically moving your program. The point is that too often, rehab programs are out of sight, out of mind. In this figurative basement, programs exist but no one pays much attention.

To make your program part of the solution to succeeding in a value-based payment model, you should have a full grasp on the clinical evidence, financial benefits, quality and patient stories that demonstrate the value of your program.

1. **Referral rates and patterns** – Identify the eligible patients that

could be sent to your programs and how many are being sent. Then, work with your leadership to develop strategies to increase those rates.

2. **Readmission rates** – A hot topic for any administrator is combating readmissions. Be able to show what the rate is for your program.

3. **Overall quality performance** – Clearly articulate the clinical outcomes from your program. Your program’s quality should be included on the overall service line quality scorecard.

4. **Marketing strategy** – Target physicians, administrators, patients, and the community. Talk up outcomes and key elements of your program. Be concise and convincing.

5. **Financial performance** – Develop programs for special populations or create programs that maximize your staff and resources. Work with your administrators to quantify the “halo” effect of your program on decreased readmissions, improved quality, etc.

If your program has a plan to address these five elements, you’ll find your program in the penthouse, not the basement. ■

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