THE CHALLENGE

Nephrology Associates of Syracuse began as a two physician practice in 1978, and has continued to grow and develop ever since. The practice now includes six physicians, three nurse practitioners, and two physician assistants who work closely and collaboratively to care for the ongoing needs of patients, and provide the highest level of quality care. Their unwavering dedication to patient well-being keeps the practice in the forefront of renal care, consistently setting a standard of excellence in the field of nephrology.

Finding lower cost alternatives that don’t sacrifice quality but ensure the continuation of vital services to the community is a constant struggle for the practice. As controller for Nephrology Associates, Kariem Hunt has been tasked with finding cost reduction alternatives on a consistent basis.

“The task of expense reduction within our organization is an every year task. In 2014 my internal goal was to reduce a minimum of three vendor expenses within the fiscal year,” said Hunt. “Every year since 2010, I have accomplished that task, with the help of Intalere discounts and supplier relationships.”

THE SOLUTION

Hunt’s project scope objective generally started with a preview of the previous fiscal year’s expenses for the current suppliers and then targeting a 25 percent cost reduction goal for each supplier, examining options beginning with Intalere preferred suppliers first. “I identified potential supplier candidates to make cost reduction changes to start with, and I went through this same exercise with each one,” said Hunt. “The goal was to finalize all cost savings by fiscal year end of 2014.” His target areas for savings were generally identified through the facility financials and in working with other administrators, listening to discussions and understanding where there were opportunities for quick wins.

Hunt’s initial attendance at the Intalere Member Conference was quite an eye opener that became a jump start to his contract review process. “The conference was extremely informative and allowed me to realize that Intalere touches just about everything we do,” said Hunt. “I got the chance to meet and see some of these suppliers and have preliminary face-to-face talks. It’s a great opportunity to help put people and ideas together.”

Using contacts made at the Intalere conference, and accessing Intalere’s Member Resources website to review the existing contracts, Hunt secured a preliminary list of suppliers and then brought in his team of managers to determine which would be the best fit in each particular area.
THE OUTCOME

Five service-related suppliers were chosen and all five were successfully converted to the lower cost provider. The categories for cost reduction included waste removal, document shredding, answering service, laundry service and telephone. Two Intalere contracts that were implemented which brought big savings numbers to Nephrology Associates were in the areas of document shredding and laundry. The document shredding brought a 66 percent savings while the laundry service through the Intalere supplier was a 78 percent savings.

“The whole Intalere experience from day one has me in the mode of really understanding cost savings,” said Hunt. “And the best thing about the relationship is that I don’t have to call a general 800 number or email address. My Intalere rep is always there. I know I’ve got a lead person who is always going to help.”

Every year since 2010, I have accomplished [my cost reduction goals], with the help of Intalere discounts and supplier relationships.”

Kariem Hunt ∙ Controller ∙ Nephrology Associates of Syracuse

The collaboration efforts on this project included insight from Nephrology Associates practice director, the clinical supervisor and the patient services manager.

“We truly formed a great team combining financial knowledge with clinical expertise to make everything come together,” said Hunt. They were able to win physicians over by presenting them with quick snapshots of savings and quality that quickly communicated how the practice could benefit.

Hunt is already hard at work on this year’s cost reduction objectives, which include credit card processing services through an Intalere supplier that promises to yield more high percentage savings gains and working with his Intalere representative on a supplier match report that will identify even more opportunity.

“Intalere’s mission focuses on elevating the operational health of America’s healthcare providers by designing tailored, smart solutions that deliver optimal cost, quality and clinical outcomes. We strive to be the essential partner for operational excellence in healthcare through customized solutions that address customers’ individual needs. We assist our customers in managing their entire non-labor spend, providing innovative technologies, products and services, and leveraging the best practices of a provider-led model.”

Intalere Supply Chain Management Solutions

Cost-optimization for surgical and OR products, including custom procedure trays, surgical instruments and wound closure supplies.

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