

RCM outsourcing frees up resupply staff for new challenges and growth

Challenges

- Ongoing staffing challenges and high turnover led to lag time in order processing
- An influx of new patients pulled staff focus which caused resupply order rates to fall behind
- Organization wanted to grow but didn't have available resources

Solution

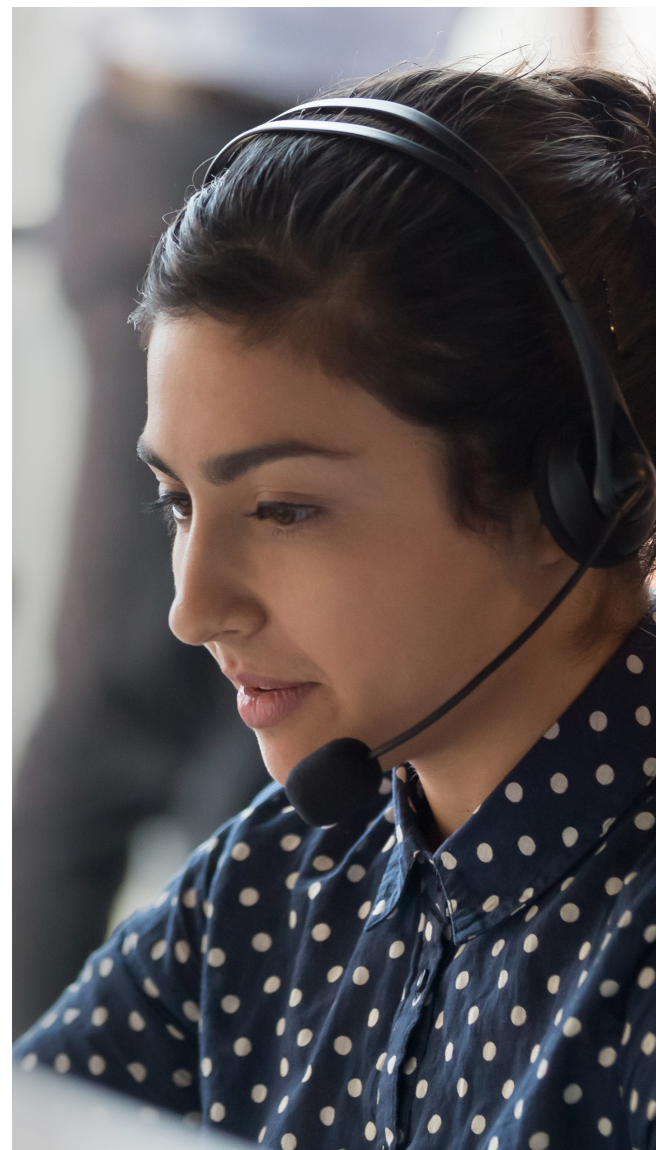
Outsourcing to
Brightree RCM services

Ochsner Home Medical Equipment was running a successful resupply program, mainly by ensuring their sleep apnea patients had consistent access to the supplies they needed. But a series of changes complicated their situation. Growing demand for HME services, driven by increases in chronic diseases, put more pressure on their already strained workforce. And an organizational goal to grow the business by adding therapy lines and expanding into new regions led to burnout and turnover of Ochsner's staff.

“Our staff is a call center, but they also process resupply orders,” said Christiana Brown, director of operations for Ochsner Home Medical Equipment. “Our staff had trouble prioritizing tasks. They were constantly trying to manage their productivity while also being flexible for our patients.”

Many resupply programs face similar challenges. Manual processes, ever-changing payor and CMS guidelines and the demanding, complex nature of the job contribute to difficulties keeping skilled staff on board. These same issues can affect patient engagement, which is foundational to the success of a resupply program.

But the tipping point for Brown's team came when another HME went out of business. “We had an influx of all these new patients, and that caused our resupply program to fall behind,” she said. “That was when we started considering outsourcing.”



Evaluating outsourcing needs and goals

Brown's group started looking at which tasks and functions they wanted to keep internal and which to outsource by considering what would help make the business most profitable. "When considering outsourcing, you have to look at your book of business and your strategy—whether you want to grow and see more patients, or whether you want to increase profitability with your existing patient base," Brown said.

She also noted that there is sometimes resistance to the idea. "There can be a stigma around outsourcing because people think it means you have to reduce staff. But that's not automatically the case, especially in resupply. Supplementing the staff you already have lets your team focus on other areas of your business that can't be outsourced," she explained. "That's a hidden gain in the big picture. It's worth at least a conversation to find out what options are available – outsourcing might make more sense than you think."

When looking for an outsourcing vendor, it's helpful to have a process to help evaluate your specific challenges. "Experience, reputation, technology and client references obviously count," said Brown. "But when you've hit your tipping point and you're raising your hand saying you need help, be sure that partner is checking all the boxes and meeting your needs."

Working with Brightree RCM pays off

Brown said Ochsner has seen many benefits to outsourcing her resupply program's RCM to Brightree. "The order processing time was the biggest improvement we saw," she said. Their turn-around time for resupply has been reduced to 2.7 days—a metric similar to Amazon.

"We've also gotten access to industry best practices that we didn't have before," she said. "Implementing autopay and up-front collections has helped us reduce our recovery rate significantly across the board. Closely monitoring orders in process helps us make sure we're staying on top of our orders and getting products to the patients as quickly as possible."

She noted that when you outsource RCM functions, you gain access to the in-depth expertise that's required to handle industry changes. She said housing all that information in one solution, rather than relying on individuals who may retire or leave, has been one of the biggest positives across all resupply categories. Brightree also has helped identify root cause factors to improve workflows and implemented metrics such as outstanding orders, total processing times and evaluating outliers.

"I think our numbers speak for themselves," Brown said. "Outsourcing our resupply RCM has freed up our staff to focus on new opportunities and new product lines. Using an RCM service can benefit my business as far as my customer base, my patient experience, and ultimately, bottom line revenue."

"It all comes back to the work we do for the patients," Brown said. "If this is going to give them the opportunity to get the supplies they need for their healthcare concerns, it's always going to be the best option if it's in the best interest of the patients."

Results



Resupply order turn-around time reduced to 2.7 days – similar to Amazon



Sleep therapy resupply workflow was streamlined to serve more patients



Grew business by adding a new therapy