

Elevating the Role of Coding in Clinical Documentation Improvement: A day-in-the-life of Enjoin's clinical coding analysts



Desiring a change of pace

Brandy Kline, RHIA, CCS, CCSP, CCDS, was working as a co-HIM director in an acute-care hospital when she realized she needed more flexibility to complement her husband's military career that required the couple to relocate frequently. With an associate's degree in science and a bachelor's degree in HIM, Kline knew she wanted to stay in the field and continue to pursue her love for medicine. However, she wasn't sure whether she'd be able to find a work-from-home position that would support her desire to learn more about the clinical aspects of coding.

Kline recalls an introduction to Garry L. Huff, M.D., CCS, CCDS, co-founder of then-DRG Review, one of the first completely physician operated clinical coding management companies. Huff contracted with Kline's facility several years prior to educate physicians and launch a CDI program. Impressed with his clinical and coding knowledge, she welcomed the opportunity to join the company when a clinical coding analyst position became available in 2008.

Clinical coding analysts have worked side-by-side with board-certified physicians since 1987 when Dr. Huff founded the company that is now known as **Enjoin**. Together, this team of analysts and physicians review documentation and coding to ensure that it accurately portrays patient complexity and care delivery.

"My whole vision was to fill the gap and enable coders and physicians to better communicate with each other," says Dr. Huff. "Physicians need to know how important it is to communicate with the people who are abstracting their records. Enjoin is a microcosm of how it should ideally work in any organization."

As Enjoin's current coordinator of training and quality assurance, Kline not only performs pre-bill chart reviews for clients' physician advisors, but she also trains and interviews new clinical coding analysts, performs QA reviews, and works with IT to develop client-specific data reports.

Seeking a challenging work environment

Edgar Botello, CCS, agrees. Botello, whose professional background includes inpatient coding, coding management, post-discharge reviews, and physician education, says he wanted a more stimulating work environment. "I was looking for an opportunity where I'd be exposed to a lot of knowledge and expertise. Dr. Huff and his associates bring that to the table," he adds.

Working for a respected company that encourages growth

Greta Goodman, MSW, CCS, CCDS, had worked in clinical documentation improvement at an acute care hospital for eight years when she decided to make a change. Greta wanted to continue working in CDI/Coding but sought more challenging opportunities and career advancement.

Goodman recalls her intention to focus on auditing while working for a company with a solid reputation in the industry. "When I saw this position, openings were available at other companies. What intrigued me about Enjoin was their level of industry involvement. Several Enjoin employees were on the ACDIS advisory board and others had been speakers at healthcare conferences. I knew Enjoin was a highly respected company and therefore felt comfortable making the leap."

After two years with Enjoin, Goodman believes the change was the best decision for her career. "From my first day, everyone was so welcoming and encouraging. They really want you to succeed. I find my work both challenging and rewarding. I learn something new every day. Being a clinical coding analyst is truly an exciting role."

"It's a collaboration. I'm able to use what I've learned in school—anatomy and physiology, pharmacology—and take it to the next level. That's very rewarding," says Kline. "Just being associated with this company gives you a boost. It's an advancement in your career."

Advancing CDI Together.



Gaining clinical expertise

Working closely with Enjoin's physicians, clinical coding analysts have direct access to skilled clinicians with specialized knowledge.

Working at Enjoin has boosted Goodman's clinical expertise to a new level. "Every day I receive ongoing education by learning about medical advances and opportunities for clinical documentation improvement from a physician," she says. "These daily interactions keep me up to date with the most current best practices and support high-quality chart reviews."

Botello agrees that he gains clinical insights daily. "This equips me with the knowledge to approach records most accurately and identify clinical indicators that are suggestive of a diagnosis."

Kline appreciates having access to cutting-edge clinical information. "Most of our physicians practice at least part-time, so they're staying up to date on new drugs and protocols. This information is passed on to us during our daily discussions. We're also able to sit in on client education sessions."

All in a day's work ... of a clinical coding analyst

Teamwork is at the core of Enjoin's workflow. Enjoin's clinical coding analysts are typically assigned 2-3 primary clients and review an average of 40 records daily. These records are drawn from each client's pre-determined MS-DRG focus list and often undergo an internal (client) audit before one of Enjoin's analysts performs a review. Analysts are expected to review each chart, consult with an Enjoin physician, and compile recommendations within a 24-hour turnaround time. See the sidebar for more details about a clinical coding analyst's primary responsibilities.

**Interested in becoming a clinical coding analyst?
Visit careers@enjoincdi.com to learn more
about this challenging and important role.**



Clinical Coding Analyst Profile

Definition: A coder who has enhanced his or her clinical knowledge or a CDI specialist who has enhanced his or her coding knowledge. This individual helps bridge the gap between coding and clinical medicine.

What does it take to be a CCA?

- Ability to connect the dots and think strategically
- 5+ years experience working in a coding, clinical, or CDI role
- CCS, CCDS, or CDIP credentials
- Ability to work from home in a fast-paced environment
- Flexibility, self-motivation and discipline
- Strong written and verbal communication skills

Primary Responsibilities

- Abstract clinical data (including narrative and structured data) and apply it to the ICD-10 coding system
- Construct compliant, succinct, and non-leading queries
- Convey each patient's story as concisely as possible using evidence-based clinical indicators
- Identify how documentation affects reimbursement, quality metrics, and risk adjustment
- Recognize clinical indicators of acute and chronic conditions that define population risk and disease severity.

