



# Blount Memorial Physicians Group:

A targeted approach to undercover E/M risks, opportunities in 2021

## Client Profile

- ✓ 300-community hospital
- ✓ 200+ Providers
- ✓ Located in Maryville, Tennessee
- ✓ Affiliated with Blount Memorial Physicians Group

## Challenges

- Assess financial impact of the new 2021 E/M guidelines
- Engage non-employed physicians in E/M documentation improvement
- Mitigate compliance risk related to over-coding

## Results

- Identified specific financial opportunities related to 99213
- Pinpointed specific compliance risk related to 99214 and 99215
- Provided physician-led, peer-to-peer education to ensure knowledge transfer

## Example of Revenue Opportunity and Revenue at Risk

Based on extrapolation of the findings to the payor (2) population audited with the 17% error rate for 99213, these opportunities could translate into hundreds of thousands of potential revenue.

As well, with 22% error rate in downcoding of 99213, this could translate up to \$1M in revenue at risk.

## Background

When **Kim Toole**, CPC CPMA CEMC CRC CDEO, clinical documentation and coding compliance supervisor at Blount Memorial Hospital in Maryville, Tennessee read that CMS was revamping coding guidelines and reimbursement structure for office-based outpatient evaluation and management (E/M) codes starting January 1, 2021, she knew that proactive audits would be the only way to ensure revenue integrity.

Toole wanted to identify potential compliance risks and understand financial impact. The goal? Engage physicians in targeted education and improvement efforts related to the organization's unique vulnerabilities.

## E/M auditing: The Enjoin method

- 1 Perform targeted chart reviews using a data-driven approach to assess opportunities and compliance risks associated with the 2021 E/M changes.
- 2 Provide peer-to-peer education that promotes physician buy-in and rapid process improvement.
- 3 Ensure sustainable and scalable results that supports compliant documentation and coding.

## Tackling proactive E/M audits with a trusted partner

After previously working with Enjoin to enhance HCC education and boost performance in its Accountable Care Organization, Blount Memorial decided to partner with them once again to assist with E/M audits. With Enjoin's extensive experience in documentation/coding accuracy and provider education, it was a natural extension to help the organization address the new E/M changes with a baseline data analysis and audit to measure opportunity and identify gaps for improvement. Toole was particularly interested in Enjoin's ability to provide physician-led education.

"Enjoin's educators are also practicing physicians, and they know the challenges that other providers face in treating patients every day. They can say, 'I had a particular patient that presented just like this the other day when I was working in the hospital.'"



## Identifying financial risks, opportunities

For this baseline audit, Enjoin's population health team reviewed a representative sample of payor groups focusing on time, and Medical Decision Making (MDM). Errors were defined as cases for which physicians billed a higher or lower E/M level than what the documentation would support if using the new guidelines. Also, a comparison was made between current guidelines and new 2021 guidelines

Like most organizations, Blount Memorial was interested in answers to questions such as:

- Are we poised to lose revenue under the new 2021 guidelines?
- Will there be financial opportunities?
- And what key initiatives can we initiate that will lead to greater revenue integrity?

Enjoin ultimately identified both risk and opportunity. Almost 1 in 2 (41%) encounters had an E/M opportunity based on 1995 guidelines. Very different outcomes were identified when applying the 2021 guidelines. Approximately 1 in 4 encounters had opportunity and within those 79% of opportunities were related to overcoding of 99213 and only 21% of findings showing undercoding related to 99214 and 99204. There is no direct correlation between existing 1995 guideline opportunities and suspected 2021 guideline opportunities. When extrapolated to all payors with similar trends, the opportunity for revenue lift within the 1995 guideline audit turned into a potential for significant revenue loss with the new 2021 guidelines.

Not surprisingly, compliance risk associated with telemedicine services and other OIG focus areas such as history of diagnoses incorrectly captured as active were also identified.

## Providing peer-to-peer education

At the conclusion of the audit, Enjoin provided detailed results identifying opportunities, compliance risks, and CPT code outliers by provider and/or practice. This enabled Blount to establish a comprehensive program to ongoing targeted education as well as documentation and coding improvement efforts to support the changes.

The team also calculated financial impact using the 2021 guidelines and provided physician-led education to BMPG's physicians, focusing on accurate documentation of time, MDM, and a medically appropriate history and exam.

Physicians also benefit directly from the peer-to-peer education resulting in rapid behavior change confirming that that *peer-to-peer is critical for successful provider engagement*.

## Ensuring sustainable and scalable results

Continuation of Enjoin audits and provider education are underway to support Blount and assess provider adoption of the new guidelines.

"Through the baseline audit and comparing to current guidelines, we determined that both challenges and opportunities already existed for us," states Toole. "The implementation of the 2021 guidelines creates another layer of complexity and compliance risk. Ongoing auditing coupled with customized, data-driven and peer led education is imperative for risk reduction and appropriate translation of care."

### Know the facts

Improper payments for office-based E/M codes are projected to reach approximately \$1.1 billion!

Organizations cannot assume that its previous opportunities will translate into 2021 pain points therefore it is imperative to quickly create an auditing and education roadmap with a focus on compliance.

What is your plan to ensure revenue integrity?



Contact us today to monitor compliance and support revenue integrity for 2021 E/M code changes.  
Visit <https://www.enjoincdi.com/evaluation-and-management/>



(844) ENJOIN1  
[www.enjoincdi.com](http://www.enjoincdi.com)  
[info@enjoincdi.com](mailto:info@enjoincdi.com)