



Learn the **ABCs** of **ACOs**

Is Your Patient Access Program Ready for Accountable Care Organizations?

*By Cindy Dullea, RN, MBA, CHAM
SVP, Marketing, SCI Solutions*

Under the 2010 Healthcare Reform Law, a new model was proposed for delivering health services to Medicare beneficiaries. Accountable Care Organizations (ACO) are a local network of providers (primary and specialty care) and hospitals that can be held accountable for the cost and quality of care delivered. Under the new law, ACOs would agree to manage all of the healthcare needs of a minimum of 5,000 Medicare beneficiaries for at least three years, beginning January 2012. As local healthcare organizations begin to form ACOs, your Patient Access department will play a role in implementation and execution. Some areas for consideration would include:

- **Primary Care to Specialty Care Referrals** – The management of medically necessary care along with strong integration of your outpatient electronic orders will be key. Paper and faxed orders will become inefficient. Have you considered automating community physician orders?
- **Community Physician Ordering of Outpatient Services** – This will drive a stronger need for medical necessity, insurance verification and authorizations. An intelligent hospital-based scheduling system is necessary

to support multi-location and complex scheduling rules. Synchronization of electronic orders and scheduling is also paramount along with automated appointment reminders. Do your processes ensure nothing is overlooked for every appointment?

- **Support for Self-Service** – Not only will self service be important for physician scheduling, but today's Medicare population is technically savvy and will demand self-service appointment scheduling and automated on-site registration through kiosks. Is your organization ahead—or behind—the self-service technology curve?

The Role of Patient Access

Patient Access will play a pivotal role in the support of care coordination as ACOs begin to take shape in your local communities. How well your organization executes that role will hinge on the quality of your preparation. Patient Access must develop new skills and creative approaches for providing clinical services while managing front-end revenue cycle processes and, most importantly, the front-door patient experience. 🕒