

Uniform Business Office Newsletter

Helping frontline users perform their day-to-day jobs

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to Privacy concerns, all personal identifiers, e.g., names and personal e-mail addresses and photos were removed from this newsletter. We apologize for this inconvenience. If you have questions about an article, please contact the UBO Help Desk UBO.helpdesk@altarm.org (703-575-5385).

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1. 2011 MHS Revenue Cycle Educational Conference Wrap Up and Highlights

Another successful educational conference wrapped up last month at the National Conference Center, Lansdowne, Virginia—this year with a wider, more comprehensive focus. This was the first year the TRICARE Management Activity's (TMA) Medical Expense and Reporting System (MEPRS) and Data Quality (DQ) Program Offices joined the Uniform Business Office (UBO) and the Unified Biostatistical Utility (UBU) Program Offices to sponsor the conference.

Themed "**TEAM**work: **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore," the goal of the conference was to bring together personnel

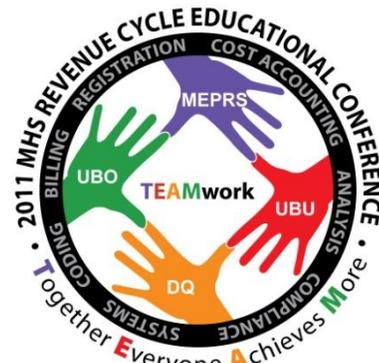
from across the Military Health System (MHS) Revenue Cycle to learn about and better understand their role(s) within the cycle and to learn and share best practices and network with colleagues from around the globe.

Despite current federal and Service budget constraints, attendance was exceptional, with almost 600 attendees. New and seasoned professional Military Treatment Facility (MTF) personnel came from as close as the National Capital Region to as far as Japan, Korea, Italy, and Guam to interact, network, learn and enhance their career paths. We especially want to thank the attendees from Japan who attended days after the natural disasters there. We understand it was difficult to leave family and loved ones behind and appreciate their commitment to supporting their MTFs by furthering their educational needs during a devastating and stressful time. We hope all is well with them and their families and as discussed at the conference closing, we continue to keep the people of Japan in our thoughts and prayers.

The conference was also a great way to learn about all of the TMA Program Offices' visions for the future and to get a jump on what's coming down the pipe. In addition, 12 returning and four new exhibitors displayed their products and services. The TMA Program Offices sincerely appreciate their participation at and support of the conference.

Highlights from the Conference

Pre-Conference. Preconference offerings on Monday included a series of beginning courses for personnel new to Medical Services Account (MSA) billing and also the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) CPC® exam. That evening a conference welcome reception was held at which attendees were invited and encouraged to network and visit conference exhibitors. Attendees were also treated to a fabulous concert by the Army string quartet. The TMA Program Offices extend a heartfelt thank you to its members for sharing their time and wonderful talent.



Opening Ceremonies. On Tuesday, the Conference officially opened with the U.S. Color Guard's presentation of the colors followed by the singing of the Star Spangled Banner.

Welcome. The TMA Program Managers each then welcomed the attendees and gave their respective overviews of their Program goals and curriculums, setting the tone and challenging attendees to “cross pollinate” and take courses across all of the educational tracks. They encouraged attendees to take away from the conference an “understanding what is needed to ‘run the business,’” to “be aware of the need for constant improvement,” and “to share ideas and solutions to common problems with one another.”

...I took all the courses related to MSA, and I found all of them helpful for my new duties. Speakers were knowledgeable and have years of experience....

Keynote Presentation. The Director of Financial Performance & Planning, Health Budgets and Financial Policy, gave the keynote speech. She discussed priorities and challenges within the Defense Health Program and the challenge of overcoming rising health care costs within the increasingly constrained Department of Defense budget. She noted the MHS revenue cycle is made up of all the administrative functions that contribute to the creation of billable events, submission of bills, collection, payment, and posting. The success of revenue optimization depends on the interdependency among all MTF staff from the registration clerk (in the collection and confirmation of OHI) to the provider (for accurate documentation), to the coder and biller. All these people, she stressed, are interconnected and required to make the MHS revenue cycle successful. Data quality is critical, she further added, because every phase of the revenue cycle is highly dependent on the completeness and accuracy of the data collected. Starting from the beginning of the revenue cycle, every data point is passed along to the next person and ultimately affects reimbursement for the MTF. An error in one part can affect the whole cycle.

All speakers were interesting and offered good guidance and advice.

Continuing Education Units. Following the motivating opening sessions, attendees were given some further information about the conference schedule and logistics and then directed to Service breakout sessions and conference courses. Over the course of three days, there were 121 courses to choose from, thirty-three (33) of which were eligible for AAPC Continuing Education Credit (CEU). *[Attendees can self-report up to 20 CEUs to the AAPC and can also self-report for credit to the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and the American Association of Healthcare Administrative Managers (AAHAM) if certified with these organizations.]* Speakers and panelists included Service Program Managers and recognized Subject Matter Experts from the field. As highlighted in section 2 below, curriculum included panel discussions of best practices and hands-on practical training. The TMA UBO Support Team also provided demonstrations of the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator (CSE) Tool, the Pharmacy Pricing Estimator Tool (PPET) and the VA/DoD Sharing Calculator.

We hope those moving through the tracks during the conference found lively debates, substantive discussions, and an array of strategies to take home. If you missed the conference or would like to download presentation materials, visit the UBO Web site at http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/annual_conf.cfm#presentations.

Thank you to all those that attended and also provided input in conference evaluations. You may still send your comments or recommendations for future educational programs to events@altarum.org. Your feedback is valuable and always appreciated.

2. Behind the Scenes...Conference Planning Is a Team Effort!

Ever wonder how the courses and speakers are chosen for the annual educational conference?

This year it was a great team effort chaired by the UBO Deputy Program Manager and amongst support staff from the four TMA Program Offices. Beginning in July 2010 they met regularly to create the overall curriculum, classes, titles, content and speakers using feedback and experience from prior conferences and questions received by the UBO Helpdesk throughout the year. Draft schedules were then vetted through meetings with the TMA UBO Advisory Work Group and points of contact within the other TMA Program Offices to arrive at a well-rounded curriculum.

The goal was to develop classes that are relevant to both new MTF staff, as well as, to present more advanced concepts and guidance changes to the well-seasoned MTF staff. Courses were also chosen and placed on the schedule in order to encourage attendance across the tracks. This year “How To” classes were developed that were designed especially for those new to the Medical Services Account program.

New also this year, attendees selected and registered for courses on-line via an interactive course schedule. The range of registrants per course was 1 to 108. The average number of registrants per course was 52. The mode, or number of registrants per course occurring most frequently, was 31. The registration numbers showed ICD-10 and Compliance courses were timely and “hot topics.” Specifically, two courses in the UBU track tied for the highest number of registrants (108): “Medical Decision Making” and “ICD-10-PCS General Guidelines.” “ICD-10-CM General Guidelines” came in a close third with 107 registrants. Other popular courses included:

- “How to: Pull MSA Reports in CHCS” (MSA) – 103 registrants
- “Bringing it All Together-Compliance and the Revenue Cycle” (UBO) – 98 registrants
- “UBO Compliance Program” (UBO) – 93 registrants
- “What Are My Daily Duties?/How to: Running Reports/Notify Roster” (MSA) – 92 registrants
- “The MEPRS Connection: How Does MEPRS Fit in the Revenue Cycle?” (DI) – 88 registrants
- “How Registration Impacts Reimbursement” (UBO) – 84 registrants
- “Making your DD 2569 Goals with a Smile” (UBO) – 79 registrants
- “TPCP Payments & Refunds” (UBO) – 78 registrants
- “CHCS and the Billing Process” (UBO) – 77 registrants
- “Coast Guard Billing” (MSA) – 68 registrants

The Conference Planning Team values the input and feedback from the conference attendees in creating future educational programs. Based on this year’s conference feedback, the efforts of the Conference Planning Team appeared to meet what the attendees wanted and needed!

If you were unable to attend this year’s conference in person, you can download the presentations to use for your own professional development at http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/annual_conf.cfm.

3. New Online Conference Survey

As part of our commitment to providing the most useful and relevant educational programs to our clients, this year’s conference introduced more robust course evaluation efforts. We are excited to share some highlights from our first-ever post-conference on-line survey to which 199 participants – roughly one-third of the attendees – responded by the submission deadline. Survey responses serve as helpful reminders and will be considered when organizing future conferences.

Who came? Among survey respondents, the Army led the Services (37.69%), followed closely by the Air Force (35.68%), Navy (15.08%), and TMA/DoD (8.04%), with the remainder identifying themselves as “other” or “not applicable.” In response to “Program affiliation,” UBO respondents led (35.68%). Attendance by respondents from other programs was widely disbursed among UBU (24.12%), Data

Integrity (18.59%), MSA (11.56%), with the remainder identifying themselves as “other” affiliation (10.05%). More than half (55%) of all respondents reported having more than seven years of experience, with roughly an even number of respondents ranging in experience from less than one to seven years. An overwhelmingly majority (90.45%) of respondents came from CONUS locations (OCONUS = 9.55%).

The program. When asked where attendees spent the majority of their time, the UBO track was by far the most highly attended (85 respondents), with Data Integrity, MSA, and UBU attracting roughly equal levels of participation (50-54 respondents). Overall, 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the conference met their expectations; and 88% agreed or strongly agreed that it was a good networking opportunity.

Facilities and logistics. Overall, National Conference Center (NCC) staff and facilities scored high marks, with the majority of respondents giving favorable ratings on staff courteousness, accommodations, classrooms, check-in, and check-out. There were numerous comments regarding classroom temperature (too cold) and the layout of the facilities (with two suggestions: add an indoor pool and roller skates would be helpful for navigating the tunnels!). Based on estimates of increased attendance due to the expansion of the conference, the UBU tracks were located in a separate building (NCC north building) this year. However, attendee feedback noted this location was isolating. As a result, we will be looking into placing all tracks together for future conferences.

Web site – registration and conference materials. Roughly ninety percent (90%) of total respondents “strongly agreed” and “agreed” that the on-line conference registration process was straightforward, that the conference Web site was “easy to navigate” and that it “included all relevant attendee information.” A slightly lower percentage (88%) strongly agreed or agreed that “Conference materials were convenient to access and download for reference [from the Conference Web site].” Several comments received noted that individual course schedules and presentation materials were difficult to obtain prior to coming to the conference. Although all speaker presentations received by the submission deadline were posted to the conference Web site prior to the conference dates, the conference planning team will improve that process for future conferences while maintaining its commitment to implementing a green conference and lightening its environmental impact.

Comments/Suggestions. For each track attended, the survey queried respondents which courses or speakers were most and least informative. Some noted the conference had a lot of information to absorb; others stated nothing was new to them. Many asked for more Service-specific courses, however, this is a TMA tri-Service conference and courses must be developed accordingly. We appreciate the respondents’ honesty and candor. Comments ranged from overwhelmingly positive to constructive:

Overall the classes were informative, some more than others depending on one’s experience.

Many repeats from last year, with so many new people that was good. [Would like] more hands on 'this is how you do it would be better.'

I agree with the tracks being applicable for my daily responsibilities, but in the future there needs to be more challenging/intermediate/advanced levels within the tracks offered.

I stepped out of the Data Integrity track and attended things of interest.

I always do learn something from TMA conferences and am glad that we do have them!!!

None [of the courses were least informative], I learned something in each class attended.

There were several [courses] I thought didn't provide any helpful information.

[The course] was not well presented and didn't have much bearing on my daily job.

All the courses I attended [were informative] [T]he allotted time for the course is not enough for so many questions among the attendees.

I found all of the speakers to be informative. A lot of the information presented was not new to me but, they still presented some things I had been neglecting doing and I was reminded of why I have to do them and some offered better and faster way of doing old stuff. Over all I thought this was a very good selection of speakers.

Since this was my first time going to this conference, I felt like there was so much information that I wanted to absorb and take back with me to share but didn't have enough time....I enjoyed hearing and learning everything that the speakers as well as the audience had to bring to the course and shared with everyone.

[P]anel was informative. It was great to be able to just ask questions and obtain several ways to approach a problem.

There were some courses that I found out after it was done that did not apply to me, and it would have been nice to know this beforehand so I could get to another more useful course.

Thank you for the Conference, it was well worth it. I've learned a lot and have plenty information to share with my staff. This was my first time, and I didn't know what it was all about, but please continue to have this yearly Conference. I found out that we were not doing everything or we were doing something incorrectly in our job.

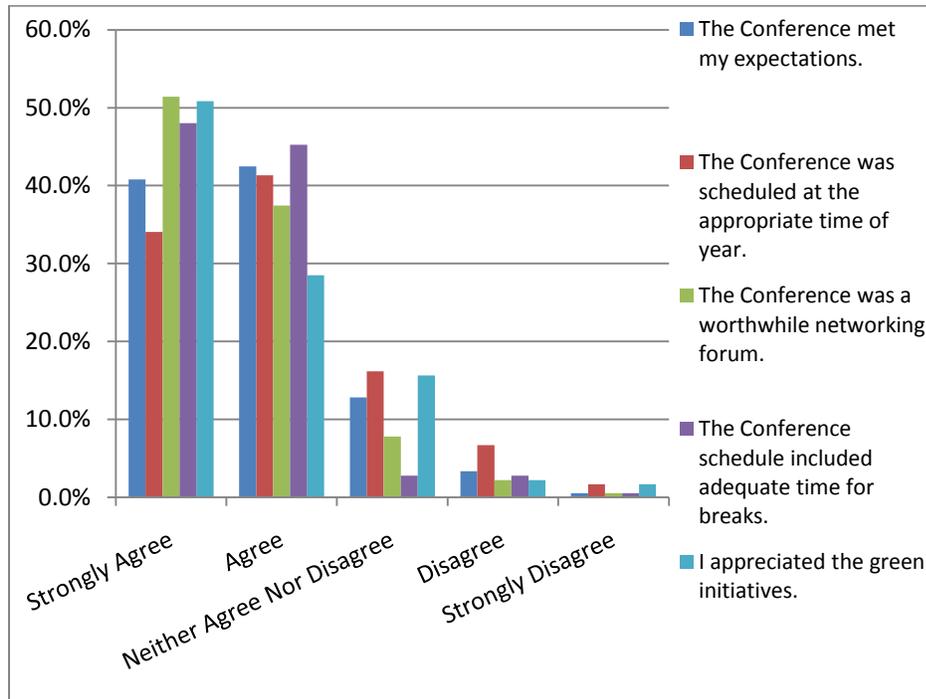
Although I didn't go to all the courses in [one track], I did find that some of the ones I did go to were very informative and so were the speakers. What they could answer they did and what they couldn't or weren't sure about, they let the audience know that they would try to get the answers.

"Great information. I didn't know we had this resource."

This was overall a pretty nice conference. I really enjoyed being able to network. I feel that is what I really got the most out of this conference. Being able to talk to other bases and get and give ideas is what the job is all about....[W]e should all be working together to make it all better.

My whole experience there was great. I learned a lot, met a lot of people from near and far, and learned a lot from both speakers and other people. I got to network with other people in my line of work and those that work in other areas....I got e-mail addresses and phone numbers for if I ever have a question or need to speak to someone right away or are unsure about something I know. I can just shoot an e-mail or pick up the phone and call someone to get answers to my questions. It was not about Army, Air Force, or Navy. We did not look at the branches of service that some people served in. It was all about people meeting people and getting information to do our jobs effectively and smarter and sharing what we all know and what we don't know.

Overall Conference Experience (as reported by a percentage of total respondents):



Conclusion. The Conference Planning Team values the input and feedback from the conference attendees in creating and improving future educational programs. If you wish to provide additional feedback, please send your comments to events@altarum.org with “Conference Survey” in the subject line.

4. Exhibitors

We would like to thank the following exhibitors for joining and supporting the conference this year: 3M Health Information Systems; Altarum Institute; Benefit Recovery; Best Practice Training Institute, LLC; DP Technologies Services, Inc.; Evolvent Technologies, Inc.; Healthcare Resolution Services, Inc.; International Alliance Solutions, Inc.; PATTCO Printer Systems, LLC; PHG Technologies; Planned Systems International, Inc.; Signature Performance, Inc.; Standard Technology, Inc.; TCAssociates; TreeFrog Data Solutions; and ZHealth Publishing.

In addition, the TMA UBO booth at the MHS Revenue Cycle Educational Conference-was well attended. The booth offered a place for conference attendees to learn more about the TMA UBO Program Office, meet UBO Program Office support staff, and to ask questions. Visitors were encouraged to review and take past TMA UBO Newsletters and to submit ideas and share stories to include in future newsletters. Hands-on tutorials and demonstrations of the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator (CSE), the Pharmacy Pricing Estimator Tool (PPET), and the VA/DoD Sharing Calculator were also available. The PPET is available on the UBO Web site at: http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/mhs_rates/pharmacy.cfm. The VA/DoD Sharing Calculator is available at <http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/billing.cfm>. The UBO Program Office has discontinued Web-based access to the CSE. If you would like a copy of the CSE, please contact your Service UBO Program Manager for assistance.

5. “MTF Highlights” Solicited

Make a difference, share your ideas, and shine a light on your MTF!



Be published in the new “MTF Highlights” section of the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) Uniform Business Office (UBO) Newsletter. Share your MTF’s best practices and stories, including real-life experiences, successes, and how you have overcome challenges.

If your MTF and UBO Program Office have a good news story, accomplishment or tip(s) to share, e-mail us your story at UBO.helpdesk@altarum.org. Include your name, MTF location and contact information.

6. UBO Learning Center

Upcoming Webinars are currently being scheduled and will be announced shortly on the UBO Learning Center Web site at http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/learning_center/training.cfm.

Presentations listed below are archived for on demand viewing, from any computer with Web browsing capability, at the UBO Learning Center at http://www.tricare.mil/ocfo/mcfs/ubo/learning_center/training.cfm.

- ICD-10 Impacts to Billing and Coding
- 2011 Updates to ICD-9 Codes
- CHCS Process Management for Reimbursement
- Military Treatment Facility Anti-Fraud Program DODI 5505.02

Visit the UBO Learning Center for any changes and/or additions to the schedule. You may also contact the UBO helpdesk at (703) 575-5385 or UBO.helpdesk@altarum.org with any questions and/or to submit recommended trainings and speakers that would be useful to the performance of your daily tasks. Let us know how we can help you do your job easier and better!

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Abbreviations/Acronyms in This Issue

AAPC	American Academy of Professional Coders
CCE	Coding Compliance Editor
CHCS	Composite Health Care System
CPC	Certified Professional Coder
CPT	Current Procedural Terminology
CSE	Cosmetic Surgery Estimator
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DRG	Diagnostic Related Group
DQ	Data Quality
ED	Emergency Department
FY	Fiscal Year
HCPCS	Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System
ICD	International Classification of Diseases, Revisions 9 and 10
ICD-10-CM	ICD Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification
ICD-10-PCS	ICD-10, Procedure Coding System
IPT	Integrated Project Team, MHS
JAG	Judge Advocate General
MCPF	Managed Care Pricing File
MEPRS	Medical Expense and Performance Reporting System
MHS	Military Health System
MSA	Medical Services Account
MTF	Military Treatment Facility
NCC	National Conference Center
NDC	National Drug Code
OHI	Other Health Insurance
PDTS	Pharmacy Data Transaction Service
POC	Point of contact
SIT	Standard Insurance Table
TMA	TRICARE Management Activity
TPOCS	Third Party Outpatient Collection System
UBO	Uniform Business Office
UBU	Unified Biostatistical Utility
VA	Veterans Affairs, Department of