

Podcast Episode Transcript: Kelli Christman and Diana Ortiz

Kelli Christman: Welcome to the newly minted Solventum Inside Angle. I'm one of your hosts, Kelli Christman. On April 1st of this year, 3M Health Care spun out to create a new independent healthcare company called Solventum. Our mission is to enable better, smarter, safer healthcare to improve lives. I'm excited to kick off this episode with our health information systems senior business director of revenue cycle, Diana Ortiz. Welcome, Diana.

Diana Ortiz: Thank you, Kelli.

Kelli Christman: So autonomous coding is a big buzzword. We've all heard it. Would love to level set with our audience on what exactly is autonomous coding?

Diana Ortiz: Great question, Kelli. So when we think about autonomous coding, it's been quite the journey. Coders initially started out using codebooks and eventually moved into solutions that helped to give them those insights a little bit more real time, so they didn't have to go look things up. Then really with I10, there was a big shift towards computer-assisted coding in the industry, being able to auto suggest codes to coders to alleviate their paths to achieving the correct code. So obviously automation is the next step. Worldwide, I think we've been on a journey to achieve automation, and what that really means is being able to automate an entire visit every code at an accurate level without a human touch. So it's something that the industry has naturally been gravitating towards and is something that now with the challenges or organizations face with their margins and achieving skillsets, being able to do this, this is something that they're eager to adopt.

Kelli Christman: Thank you for that. We are at CES this week in Dallas, and there's been a ton of excitement about it. I think there's just been a lot of excitement and an energy around this new technology, so thanks for that. That's helpful. So at a basic level, if somebody has an EHR, they're already documenting in the EHR technology, what is the benefit of having this technology sitting on top of that?

Diana Ortiz: So EHRs definitely provide a lot of service and value to organizations. They're the keeper and the governance, if you will, of the entire medical record, all the data and documentation that flows there. Sometimes there is some capabilities within EHRs to do often what's called simple visit coding or things that have a very clear connection between an order or a piece of documentation, and traditionally a single one or two type coding scenario. So there's been some venturing into areas that it's pretty low effort to achieve automation.

Where content expertise comes in is understanding the regulatory nature, the shifting of guidelines that is constantly happening, and being able to apply that towards automation. So something that Solventum has been working on for quite some time is keeping the information up-to-date, concise for coders that the direction that's being provided adheres to the guidelines. And those are constantly changing, and we've seen that over time. Used to be annual updates regulatory wise, and now they're twice a year. With COVID, we saw them happening weekly, daily sometimes. So being able to achieve automation through the lens of compliance is really important when considering how you operationalize something in addition to leveraging what the EHR can supply.

Kelli Christman: When we talk about administrative burnout, that's a huge component of how technology can really help with that. I've heard you talk about a three-pronged approach before. Can you dig into that a little bit deeper?

Diana Ortiz: Yeah. So I've often referenced how important it is to have really what we call captured a code. Having the physician, the CDI teams, and the coders all working together, leveraging the same information, the same insights to do the work that they do best. So clinicians are often the authors of the documentation. The CDI team comes in, and they're really the editors. They're that bridge between this is good documentation, but just not great or not the best. How do I get it to a coder who's ultimately going to be the publisher of the documentation and have to sign off on the finality of it? How do you connect those three together to achieve the outcomes that we're expecting to? Being able to take the approach of how to automate coding is being able to get that documentation right from the beginning.

So informing things like CAPD from the get-go, or within an ambient device to achieve the coding outcomes. I think there was a time where there wasn't a big appetite at organizations on the front end, at the documentation, at the point of care to achieve those goals, to get it right. But the coded data is so important. It really is driving organizational quality measures, their reputation within their regions, nationally rankings. Everything's really tied it to coded data. So there is certainly an impetus to get it right with autonomous, and really it's that three-prong approach to achieve automation because you certainly don't want to automate things that aren't informed by what's going to come out correctly on the backend.

Kelli Christman: It sounds like it all comes back to data.

Diana Ortiz: And nowadays, I think of it like data is the source that makes all the difference. There is so much changing within the industry in terms of technology. If you think about new devices coming out, being able to understand, are they working well? Is there complications from that? So this data, while it's always been important, has this heightened level of importance. It's the measurement by which new technologies, new innovations, new drugs are measured. So it is important to get it right. Yeah.

Kelli Christman: Thank you so much for that. And while I have you, I'm excited to announce to our Inside Angle podcast audience that Diana is going to be one of our regular hosts, talking about all things revenue cycle related. So much more to come on autonomous coding, denials management, and everything related to revenue cycles. So thanks for joining us today, Diana.

Diana Ortiz: Yeah. Thank you, Kelli. Looking forward to it.