AI Pitfalls

AI, AI, AI! It's everywhere these days and everyone is talking about it. Rather than wring our hands or talk in generalities about what artificial intelligence (AI) may or may not do, let's explore the AI issues that providers need to consider.

Ambient AI likely deserves immediate, careful consideration by providers because its utility and value seem apparent. Ambient AI refers to intelligent systems that operate continuously in the background; passively sensing their environment, interpreting context, and proactively executing tasks without requiring direct human commands or prompts. Providers are especially interested in this type of AI because it may lessen the burden of documentation.

While the benefits are relatively clear, the problems and limitations are not. Providers must consider that ambient AI:

- Lacks clinical judgment
- Includes errors
- Misidentifies speakers
- Confuses words that sound similar, especially diseases and medications (Just think of the names of all those antibiotics and biologics!)
- Omits acronyms and technical terms
- Cannot handle conversations that are overlapping
- Preserves observations, comments, and background discussions not necessarily intended to be included in medical records
- Captures incomplete statements

One or more of these problems may compromise the integrity of medical records, which is of paramount importance and is the ultimate goal of documentation of care provided.

Errors in ambient documentation may result in:

- Distortion of compliance efforts, peer review discussions, deliberations of committees, decisions by management and boards of directors
- Improper billing, including submission of false claims
- Poor communication with patients and their families
- Inaccurate audit results
- Significant overpayments

What should providers do? Addressing these issues must begin with clear policies and procedures. Key directives have to make it clear that staff must:

- Use only ambient AI tools that are provided by their employers
- Always review and correct errors in documentation developed by ambient AI

Ambient AI is seductive in an industry bedeviled by the burdens of documentation. Be careful!

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