

NAMSS 2019 Roundtable
Credentialing for Tomorrow
Washington, D.C.
May 9, 2019

Introduction

NAMSS sixth-annual industry roundtable, “Credentialing for Tomorrow,” focused on practitioner credentialing’s evolution as technology becomes more applicable and more accessible to facilities. Technology offers solutions to inefficiencies within the practitioner credentialing process and discussions continue to focus on technology that is available, sustainable, and effective in reducing current systematic inefficiencies.

The 2019 Roundtable discussion heard perspectives of hospitals, practitioners, payers, accrediting bodies, and government oversight entities to discuss the need, feasibility, and process for digitizing credentialing and the importance, as well as the current challenges, limitations, and roadblocks to its adaptation.

Roundtable participants heard from two presenters, Mike Dugan, CIO and Senior Vice President for the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), and Chris Peck, NAMSS Senior Director of Education and Learning Services. Mr. Dugan briefed participants on FSMB’s digital credentialing initiative that compares legal, compliance, and technical aspects of digital signatures, open badges, and blockchain. Ms. Peck spoke about the role Medical Staff Professionals (MSPs) play in innovating credentialing and adjusting to the demands for assessing competency for telehealth, robotics, and other artificial intelligence platforms.

Ongoing Challenges

The challenge to identify the best technologies that are accessible and practical for all facilities, while ensuring that the credentialing process is neither compromised nor further complicated continues. Technology offers much promise, but the industry must heed lessons from adopting electronic health record software’s complications. Identifying standard, attainable, and effective technologies that are applicable to all facilities—large and small—is critical to effectively modernizing the credentialing process. One of the greatest challenges of practitioner credentialing is that one data oversight can put lives at risk. Uniform standardization is essential to ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks. NAMSS continues to identify MSP knowledge gaps to meet the practitioner credentialing’s existing and future challenges.

New Challenges

While the practitioner credentialing process cannot change overnight, the industry must become nimbler so it can proactively identify and address industry changes that affect practitioner practice and competencies. As the industry moves toward automation and technology, it also must address how credentialing will change as new technologies become embedded into clinical practice. Establishing and standardizing best practices for assessing competencies and ensuring patient safety for new procedures and technologies create gaps in the credentialing process that put both patients and facilities at risk.

MSPs are at the forefront of the credentialing process and their role will continue to evolve as credentialing becomes more digitized and streamlined. MSPs experience credentialing inefficiencies first-hand and are best equipped to identify and implement technologies and practices that will streamline and improve the practitioner credentialing.

Without institutions' investment in credentialing technologies and adequate education and training for MSPs, the process will only grow more expensive, inefficient, and ineffective. As the advanced-practice provider role continues to increase, more facilities will need to credential these practitioners, adding additional strain on the practitioner credentialing process.

2019 NAMSS Roundtable Participants

NAMSS would like to thank the following industry partners for participating in this year's Roundtable:

- American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)
- American Academy of PAs (AAPA)
- American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)
- Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)
- American Hospital Association (AHA)
- American Medical Association – Organized Medical Staff Section (AMA-OMSS)
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH)
- Det Norske Veritas (DNV)
- Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG)
- Federal of State and Medical Boards (FSMB)
- Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program (HFAP)
- Medical Group Management Association (MGMA)
- National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)
- National Practitioner Databank (NPDB)
- The Joint Commission (TJC)
- Utilization Management Accreditation Commission (URAC)

NAMSS Roundtable Background

In 2014, NAMSS began its Roundtable Series to introduce and discuss standards for credentialing independent practitioners. This resulted in NAMSS releasing the Ideal Credentialing Standards, a list of 13 best-practice criteria for credentialing an initial practitioner applicant. NAMSS followed up in 2015 with a roundtable that focused on payer credentialing and introduced essential common elements for payer credentialing. In 2016, the roundtable focused on standardizing graduate medical education training verifications, which resulted in releasing the Verification of Graduate Medical Education Training (VGMET) form, in partnership with NAMSS, the AHA, ACGME, and the Organization of Program Director Associations (OPDA).

The 2017 NAMSS Roundtable focused on blockchain technology, a potentially transformative technology that could have significant affect the practitioner credentialing process. NAMSS invited Hashed Health, a blockchain healthcare technology consortium, to brief participants on the blockchain technologies' potential role in practitioner credentialing. Participants discussed blockchain role and how an established governance structure is critical as credentialing applications continue to evolve.

The NAMSS Roundtable series continued to delve into technology innovations in 2018 with a focused discussion on digitizing credentialing. The participants first heard presentations from two organizations developing technology for credentialing: the Professional Credentials Exchange, created in partnership with Hashed Health, and Paradigm, Inc. These groups presented on how technology could improve the credentialing process and how facilities could adopt existing platforms, such as blockchain and digital verification platforms.

2019 Roundtable Discussion

The NAMSS 2019 Roundtable continued the conversation about the steps that the industry needs to take today to prepare credentialing for tomorrow's needs. Participants then engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about the benefits and potential pitfalls for adopting digital credentialing technology. Roundtable discussion facilitator, Susan DuBois, guided the conversation with the following questions:

- What credentialing initiatives are your organizations pursuing?
- What are the major pain-points within the credentialing process?
- Does credentialing need to change along with the changing landscape in delivering healthcare (e.g. using robotics and artificial intelligence; new and different service sites)?

The discussion centered upon several themes:

- Enrollment quality standards vary by facility, creating quality gaps and credentialing inconsistencies.
- Credentialing a practitioner takes too long, is administratively burdensome, and too redundant.
- Too many verification processes and forms exist.

- Facilities need to credential non-physician practitioners.
- Institutions cannot, or are unwilling, to invest in credentialing technologies to improve practitioner credentialing.
- The role of the MPS is changing and needs to continue to change to address future credentialing issues.

The growing list of competencies and practitioner types that facilities need to assess and credential will substantially increase the strain on facility credentialing. Hospitals commonly name cost as a barrier to digitizing practitioner credentialing, but the cost of the undue strain from inefficient credentialing and the associated risks to patient safety will far outweigh those of implementing technologies to streamline credentialing and handle more volume.

Participants spoke to the positive impacts that standardized efforts, such as the VGMET, have had on the credentialing process and expressed interest in FSMB's digitizing efforts. The credentialing system is difficult to change—it is large and involves many critical entities. Effective revisions must take place on all levels to ensure that individual facilities, accreditation bodies, payers, practitioners, and government entities can acclimate and support changes to the credentialing process.

Next Steps

- Clarify standards and definitions and create/adopt standardized credentialing forms (e.g. VGMET) to automate and streamline the credentialing process.
- Streamline institutional and payer credentialing processes.
- Educate clinicians so they can more efficiently provide their credentialing information.
- Develop standards around AI.
- Ensure facilities can handle credentialing bandwidth as more practitioners will require credentialing.
- Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, such as the AHA and AMA-OMSS, who would benefit from an improved credentialing process.
- Continue to assess MSPs' role and develop educational programs to address knowledge and training gaps as their role evolves.

NAMSS' Government Relations team will continue to work with NAMSS leadership and Board of Directors and partner with Roundtable participants who can help develop and implement standardized elements and practices that will enable the industry adapt to new technologies, greater practitioner volume, and current and new credentialing challenges.

NAMSS thanks all of the 2019 Roundtable participants and looks forward to new and continued collaboration to create a more efficient and effective practitioner credentialing process. Please contact Molly Giammarco, NAMSS Senior Manager, Government Relations (mgiammarco@namss.org) with any questions about this report, the NAMSS Roundtable Series, or NAMSS government relations efforts.