

CMS Medical Words is Defining the Present and Future of Medical Transcription

by Christopher Cussat

For over 20 years, CMS Medical Words (CMS) has been providing transcription services to physicians and other healthcare-related professionals and agencies in Western Pennsylvania. Founder and Owner, Carolyn M. Svec, is looking toward her company's future with pensiveness about changing technologies in the industry and confidence that CMS will be ready to adapt and continue its success.

Svec began working in the health field in 1961 as a medical secretary. "I worked for a cardiologist for about 10 years," she adds. After building a new house and having children with her husband Jim, she did not want to work full time. So she registered with a temporary work agency where she continued to gain clerical experience in the health industry. Svec explains, "I started working at different hospitals because I requested work in my field, which has always been medical-related—at that time I also was interested in getting into word processing."

As a result, Svec started working at hospitals like Montefiore and she eventually ended up working at Presbyterian in its cardiac catheterization lab. Then in 1988, after responding to a newspaper ad to help someone with their home-based business, she formally became involved with transcription services. "This woman was doing transcriptions using a memory typewriter and we were already using computers at the hospital—so I thought to myself, 'You know what, I think I could do this better on my own.'" This was the catalyst that ultimately inspired Svec to formally found CMS in 1989. "It's ironic because, actually, she is now working for me—so it's kind of come full circle!" she adds.

Svec admits that beginning CMS was a slow process. "Starting out, we had a general surgeon that we worked with for a number of years. Eventually, I would just go out and make cold calls, and then it became word of mouth—and that's how we got started."

Today, the majority of CMS's business consists of doing medical-related patient notes, office notes, and other correspondence. "Our typical customers are physicians' offices, but we also work for solo-practice offices, as well as for groups of physicians," Svec adds. For example, CMS currently has an account with six physicians who are allergy specialists, and the company has worked for many different specialties over the years.

"We've worked in many fields of medicine over the years—family practice physicians, surgeons, Ob/Gyn, gastroenterology, pulmonary, neurosurgery, cardiology, pulmonary, urology, renal-endocrine, dental, oral surgery as well as a medical record department of a small hospital," she says.

Although CMS receives its transcription notes mostly from audio tapes (for which the company offers a courier pick-up service), there also have been clients who supplied hand-written notes or utilized CMS's telephone call-in option. But as technology has changed the medium for dictation, it has also required CMS to evolve with the times. Svec explains, "We'd like our new accounts to use digital, handheld dictation machines that they can dock with their computers and then transfer their recorded notes directly to our FTP site on the internet. We can then download their files to our computers and my transcribers can access the notes from their homes, transcribe them, and send the completed work directly back to each doctor." This process also creates a back-up copy of each client's audio notes for safety storage.

Svec feels that her company's competitive edge is directly related to CMS's highly qualified staff of independent contractors. "We have four very efficient and experienced transcriptionists whose accuracy is excellent," she adds. CMS also prides itself in the fact that it tries to work directly with all clients and cater to their specific needs. "Each customer is an individual person and we don't treat them all the same—if there's a doctor that needs a certain thing done, we'll do it the way they want to have it done."

The future of CMS includes a mix of expansion and related technological upgrades. Svec explains, "With the FTP site, we now have that capability to service doctors anywhere in the country and we can also have transcriptionists that live in those locations as well—so I would like to see us expand nationwide."

In addition, Svec is currently taking a six-month course in Health Information Technology (HIT) training to help better prepare CMS with record-keeping changes that are likely to occur as more and more physicians utilize Electronic Medical Records (EMR). "EMRs may eventually cut down on the amount of transcription accounts we receive—so my thought is that perhaps we can be one of the first companies to help doctors implement their EMRs," she adds.

Finally, Svec is very thankful for two people in her life who have helped her make CMS the company it is today—her husband, Jim, and her late mother, Charlotte. "My husband is extremely helpful in the business. Without him, I don't think I would have been able to keep CMS going—he is the courier, the human resource department, and the finance department! When I started my business, my first accountant and the person who worked side by side with me was my mother. She was also a tremendous help to me in getting CMS started—and she's now guiding me from above."

For more information on transcription services provided by CMS Medical Words, please visit www.cmsmedicalwords.com and www.cmsmedicalwords.net, or call 412.751.8382. †

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