DATA GOVERNANCE HELPS A LARGE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER CURB DATA WOES, BETTER MEET REGULATORY DEMANDS

BJC HealthCare

About BJC HealthCare

BJC HealthCare is one of the largest nonprofit health care organizations in the United States, serving metro St. Louis, mid-Missouri and Southern Illinois. The organization is committed to improving the health and well-being of the people and communities it serves through leadership, education, innovation, and excellence in medicine.

The Situation: Working to Overcome Organizational Data Limitations

BJC is an organization that produces and uses a significant volume of data across all functions. Yet, it faced a variety of issues hindering its ability to produce analytics and enable decision support for providers and employees. The BJC data team realized that these issues were not limited to certain functional areas but, rather, they extended across the organization.

BJC began exploring solutions to help it address this data challenge and improve internal decision-making. The organization identified data governance as a key potential area of improvement.

The Approach: Take Small Steps On the Data Governance Journey

BJC wisely opted to take small steps that would help the data team gain organizational buy-in and establish key processes around governance.

The data team received approval from BJC's chief information officer and chief clinical officer to fund a specific project around which it could wrap an initial data governance effort. The project BJC identified was in itself fairly simple, at least in theory: to outline data definitions and lineage of six regulatory electronic clinical quality measures (eCQMs). These eCQMs were in response to federal Meaningful Use regulations; properly addressing these regulatory requirements with accurate data would be essential to BJC's ability to collect appropriate reimbursement from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as from private insurance payers taking their cues from CMS best practices.

A beneficial by-product of involving the CIO and CCO was that the data

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team had a monthly opportunity with these senior leaders to report on the project status. It was quickly evident that the first data governance project fell short because not all data citizens in the organization mobilized around the governance effort. This demonstrated to BJC's executive team that data governance, while necessary, required a more advanced approach than they could facilitate as a project. For example, BJC hoped to gain consensus on the metadata needed to more effectively manage its data. They had been unable to get internal resources to spend the time creating that metadata, particularly where handoffs occurred between departments. It became apparent that clear expectations around data responsibility were required.

The Solution: Organizational Structure and Technology Together Prove Data Governance Success

BJC brought on a data governance consultant to help put a more structured, organizational approach around managing data, including creating accountability and responsibility. They created a three-tiered data governance operating model: a Data Governance Council (executives responsible for setting priorities and making decisions); Trustees (individuals responsible for the data domain who could help solve problems); and Steward communities to support the Trustees (pulled from every area of business where BJC needed representation for domain data).

BJC chartered its newly initiated program to align with Epic Systems' electronic health record software as a mission critical enterprise project that would benefit significantly from the more robust data governance organization and processes implemented via data governance. The consultant selected six data domains that needed to go into Epic, with three objectives:

- To determine accountability, including a clear understanding of what data BJC would need to manage to ensure the Epic implementation had an optimal launch

- To establish data definitions and determine optimal sources from the BJC ecosystem

- To categorize and standardize reference data (e.g., Medication Formularies).

BJC selected Collibra as its data governance platform as a solution built with business users in mind. This was critical since the majority

"A peer in the industry pointed out the analogy that I like to use: Educating people about data governance is like how we educated Americans back in the 1950s not to litter. Today, no one would dream of throwing trash on the ground. I want the same to be true of data governance: that BJC's business users wouldn't even think about 'littering' our systems with bad data."

Laura Tellmann
Director, Clinical Informatics

of the individuals who comprise BJC's data governance organization hail from clinical and administrative roles, not information technology. Collibra can ensure all data is described in a way the business needs to use it, along with the right level of detail, and business users can take ownership of the creation and approval of relevant technical and business descriptions.

Prior to the data governance initiative, BJC users were required to conduct significant and time-intensive investigations, even to add data to a list of reference values or understand where they should get a certain piece of data. This would include having to interview people in the organization to understand their relationship to data without having a true understanding of who had an authoritative voice about a specific data issue. With data governance now in place, BJC has enabled more cross-organizational cooperation about information sharing and data lineage.

Through the course of defining what data is critical to the organization, BJC has worked to identify how many of those critical data elements have definitions, the source(s) from where critical data originates, hierarchy and relationships between and among these critical data elements, and how many of those data elements have been standardized.

With an organized data governance team and the Collibra Data Governance Center platform in place, BJC has the people and processes to have a meaningful conversation about how to resolve particular data problems. Looking into the future, BJC plans to expand the information provided within Collibra to include robust quality measurement. Creating increasingly sophisticated reporting will also be part of BJC's future data governance plans, as well as ensuring the organization has robust metadata management processes, which will help extend how BJC uses data on both the business and clinical sides. For example, to add a value to a reference data set, the process to gain data governance approvals will be automated within Collibra and distributed to source systems through Collibra or Collibra Connect.

"People are calling the data governance team with questions and we're seeing that our users are starting to have greater confidence in the quality of our data. People are seeing a light."

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