



# Together for the Common Good: Constellation and CRICO Strategies

Using medical professional liability (MPL) claim data to identify and guide process changes that reduce diagnostic error



## CRICO Strategies' Approach



review legal  
& medical files



apply taxonomy



comparative analysis



actionable insights

Constellation is a growing portfolio of MPL insurance and “beyond insurance” companies, including MMIC, UMIA, and Arkansas Mutual, focused on proactive, data-informed patient safety solutions. They expanded their focus in 2013 when they began their partnership with CRICO Strategies and started using its Comparative Benchmarking System (CBS) for deep analysis of its MPL experience. Through this partnership, Constellation has vastly increased its ability to deliver insights and guidance that support providers in fearlessly practicing good medicine. CRICO Strategies’ tools and methodology enabled Constellation to identify vulnerabilities driving previously vexing diagnostic failure claims, providing insights guiding development of multi-pronged education and engagement strategies to support safer practice and reduce outpatient MPL risks. For Constellation, what’s good for care teams is good for business.

### Challenge

Constellation had been a long-standing member of a data sharing and benchmarking program and followed national industry groups (ASHRM, MPL Association, etc.) for perspective on national MPL trends. But, as its policyholders sought deeper data analytics to understand their clinical vulnerabilities, Constellation struggled to fulfill their needs. They sought a partner with the tools and experience to identify and understand clinical vulnerabilities underlying their MPL claims.

#### A CHANCE MEETING AND A BLOSSOMING PARTNERSHIP

Constellation Chief Medical Officer Laurie Drill-Mellum and her patient safety leaders knew their diagnosis-related claims drove an increase in the frequency and costs, but they *struggled to understand the underlying factors behind them* and provide actionable solutions to their policyholders.

Dr. Drill-Mellum met CRICO leaders at an industry conference, and was intrigued by CRICO Strategies’ approach of analyzing MPL claims to identify and pinpoint vulnerabilities, inform practice and process change across care settings, and drive demonstrable patient safety improvements. Learning about CRICO Strategies’ method—leveraging expert clinicians’ review of claim files and medical records to understand vulnerabilities driving harm, and translating that information into analyzable data—they knew they’d found their new partner.

#### A HYPOTHESIS CONFIRMED

CRICO Strategies’ deep coding and the analytic power of CBS quickly confirmed diagnosis-related claims as a primary area of vulnerability and a challenge shared by peers across the country. Diagnostic error as a factor in claims affects providers across multiple specialties, predominantly in the outpatient setting.

## Findings

DIAGNOSIS-RELATED CASES ARE...

3<sup>rd</sup>

...the third most frequent case type

1<sup>st</sup>

...the highest driver of costs



58% originate in the outpatient setting

### BREAKDOWNS IN THE OUTPATIENT DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS OF CARE

58% initial assessment

35% testing and results processing

45% follow-up system failures

### INSIGHT

- The findings emphasize the importance of follow-up systems that support the communication and information exchange upon which the ‘thinking side’ of diagnosis relies

## Results

Sensitive to its policyholders, the Constellation team was aware that efforts to tackle diagnostic error could be perceived as telling clinicians how to practice medicine, so it sought to highlight the key vulnerabilities in the diagnostic process and provide operational support to mitigate risks along the way.

Using CRICO Strategies’ 12-Step Diagnostic Process of Care Framework, Constellation mapped clinical and operational breakdowns along the diagnostic process. The data quickly pointed to a lack of “closed-loop” care team communication process, revealing that even when providers take the appropriate clinical steps to arrive at a diagnosis, operational failures—delays or failures to schedule a test or referral, mis-routed or unreviewed test results or consult notes, etc.—may still lead to diagnostic errors. This insight—that diagnostic errors were more about systems and processes and less about clinical judgment—broke traditional thinking that an accurate and timely diagnosis is the responsibility of the physician alone.

Further, in addition to the analytical framework to highlight specific follow-up system failures, *through their partnership with CRICO Strategies, Constellation could now link clinical and operational vulnerabilities with financial losses.* Connecting clinical and operational elements with financial data would enable even more effective engagement with C-suite leaders to drive operational change.

## Action

### INCREASING AWARENESS, ENABLING IMPROVEMENTS FOR POLICYHOLDERS

Leveraging their newfound clarity of the scope, impact, and driving factors behind their diagnosis-related claims, Constellation began a multi-pronged campaign designed to broadly increase awareness, enable improvements, and position providers and administrators with methods for linking the 20/20 hindsight of MPL data with strategies for future improvements. Constellation developed system-focused programming and interventions to support clinicians and the entire care team through the diagnostic process. Among them:

- **Web-based suite of bundled solutions for preventing diagnostic error**—practice assessments, clinical guidelines, checklists and a webinar—for educating and enabling providers and leaders in one stop.
- **Clinic risk reports** for delivering targeted information to practice leaders highlighting key vulnerabilities in the diagnostic process, with case examples to bring these data to life.
- **Top 10 checklist for preventing diagnostic vulnerabilities**, and guidance for linking these data with real-time risk assessment tools (e.g., FMEAs and RCAs).
- **Diagnosis-focused issues of *Brink* magazine**, dedicated to improving the diagnostic process, leveraging the lessons learned from their analytic journey.

*“We’ve found such value by looking through the lens of this unique data set, and while it’s transformed our perspectives on improving patient care on a local and regional level, we think these data can actually help solve this problem on a national scale. We feel an obligation to share our newfound awareness of this problem on a national stage.”*

—Laurie Drill-Mellum, MD

#### EXPANDING HORIZONS: INFORMING STATE AND NATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC ERROR REDUCTION EFFORTS

In addition to leveraging the data and insights to support its policyholders—similar to CRICO Strategies’ mission to broadly disseminate patient safety best practices—Constellation began supporting a grassroots Minnesota-wide partnership to reduce diagnostic error, using data-driven guidance to support development of a roadmap for organizations tackling this issue state-wide.

On a national front, Constellation has shared its insights with many others in the insurance and patient safety communities.

#### SUSTAINING CHANGE

Constellation’s first and constant priority remains their customers. They have recently developed individualized

policyholder reports to highlight potential risk areas by specialty and practice setting that can be paired with their ever-growing tools, programming, and partnerships designed to support individual policyholders and teams alike.

These include:

- **Individualized preventing diagnostic error tracks:** Tools and guidance for engaging all team members—working at the top of their license and capabilities—in the diagnostic process
- **Physician wellness tools:** Focusing on team communication, clinician peer support and personal resiliency
- **Operational support resources:** Through partnerships with external organizations, access to patient experience and care team redesign experts

## Outcome

Since the start of their partnership with CRICO Strategies in 2013, the Constellation team has deepened their understanding of the data, expanded their analytic capabilities, and piqued multidisciplinary interest across the company for ways to leverage insights gained through MPL analytics.

Ultimately, Constellation seeks the same results that inspired the CRICO Strategies partnership from the beginning: demonstrable reduction in claim volume and clinical harm from diagnostic error. While they await the data, Constellation measures success by the depth of knowledge gained through this partnership and the breadth of programming they’ve developed to improve all aspects of the diagnostic process, from team communication to clinician wellbeing.

While the team will remain patient for enough data to measure the clinical impact of their efforts, they’re tending to the fruits of their CRICO Strategies data partnership, continuing to support clinicians and teams with data-driven guidance, leaving the practice of medicine up to the experts.

*“I’ve heard several times from clients and prospective clients that no one has been able to provide them data like we have. The insights we’ve gained—and passed on to our clients—have really set us apart.”*

—Angie Griffith, VP Customer Acquisition

## Leveraging MPL data within Constellation



The Claim Department examines clinical and financial data, learning from past claims to support better defense and coverage for open claims.



The Patient Safety Team creates dashboards to highlight high-risk areas and evaluate service models and risk prevention products.



Multiple teams use data visualizations to highlight hot spots.

CRICO Strategies' tools and methodology enabled Constellation to identify vulnerabilities driving previously vexing diagnostic failure claims, providing insights guiding development of multi-pronged education and engagement strategies to support safer practice and reduce ambulatory MPL risks. For Constellation, what's good for care teams is good for business.

**CRICO Strategies** is a division of The Risk Management Foundation of the Harvard Medical Institutions Incorporated, a CRICO company. A recognized leader in evidence-based risk management, CRICO is a group of companies serving the Harvard medical community. Its mission of improving patient safety is extended nationally, as Strategies offers risk solutions that deliver the highest degree of insight and data integrity.

Strategies' community of peers, representing more than 400 hospitals and 180,000 physicians, share dialogue and comparative analyses of claim data and effective patient safety practices.

**Constellation** is a growing portfolio of medical professional liability (MPL) insurance and "beyond insurance" companies. Formed in response to the ever-changing realities of health care it is dedicated to reducing risk and supporting physicians and care teams, thereby improving business results.

Members of Constellation include MMIC, UMIA, and Arkansas Mutual.

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A division of the Risk Management Foundation of the Harvard Medical Institutions, Inc.

