How Web Bots Solve Healthcare RCM Problems

Aligning the right tasks with AI and RPA technologies to generate cash faster, increase efficiencies and lower cost

Jeff Nieman, Meduit *CEO*

Jason Petrasich, *Senior Vice President AI,* Meduit

Welcome to the Meduit Podcast. Today, we're going to talk about how web bots solves specific RCM problems with Jason Petrasich, Senior Vice President of Artificial Intelligence for Meduit. I'm Jeff Nieman, Meduit CEO. Welcome, everyone. Jason, let's get started. We know that no one's going back to business as usual, and that includes healthcare revenue cycle management organizations. What do providers need to be thinking about as they refocus their RCM strategies?

JASON   Thanks, Jeff. Absolutely, COVID-19 has completing kind of upended how people think about work, and functions that most organizations never would have considered allowing to be worked remotely before and now being worked remotely out of necessity. So, you know, this has created a huge challenge for employers and employees, you know, managing productivity, managing quality, obviously maintaining HIPAA security on everything. And, you know, I really think that going forward, RCM solutions need to be flexible and, you know, figure out how to allow that, you know, scale up or scale down of resources and whether they're internally or remote, it's an important, you know, driver in maintaining, you know, control over the flow of cash in the organization. And as COVID affects service revenue, we need to protect the financial health of the organization and mitigate any of those ups and downs in that process. And the other thing is I think the pandemic has really kind of set the table for pushing robotic process automation forward. It's already been getting some traction over the last couple years within the industry, but there have been a lot of, you know, uncertainty about the value and the necessity of pushing a new, you know, technological approach into rev cycle. And I think a lot of people are at the point now where they realize they're definitely going to need these tools in order to survive and keep strong in their organization.

JEFF   Can you tell us why artificial intelligence and robotic process automation are the future of a healthy revenue cycle?

JASON   The idea of robotic process automation is not replace all your employees with robots. It's really not like that. It's more of complementing the staff that you have in place. You know, a really good deployment of robotic process automation, you know, with some AI behind it, is going to work hand-in-hand with the staff that you have. And really, it's actually going to elevate the revenue cycle experts that you have in place because they're the ones

that are great at problem solving, critical thinking, and if you can use the automation tools to free up some of the mundane tasks that they do, the things that are very repetitive, you know, they're pretty defined in terms of the process steps that need to happen, not a lot of decisioning process within that, that actually frees that staff up to really focus on those opportunities. And you're really optimizing the workforce that you have. And, you know, so when you think about, you know, what does a healthy revenue cycle look like in the future, obviously it's maintaining the financial health for the organization, and that's the throughput, right. You've got to get claims through all the way to payment. And the payers are also using robotic process automation, and they're also creating rules to stop and stall on claims. In order for provider organizations to keep the balance there, they're going to have to deploy these technologies to help automate some of those responses back to those payers to make sure that cash keeps flowing.

JEFF   Yeah. So elaborate a little bit more on what the right tasks are that are ideal for AI and RPA tools in the revenue cycle.

JASON   Sure. It's really anything that's repetitive and kind of follows a defined business structure, you know, so a set of rules. If you have, you know, a job aide that you hand out to your rev cycle staff for a particular process, you know, when you have this scenario, here are the four steps that you do to, you know, work this account or move this forward through the process. So the things that are repetitive with a high amount of volume are the ones that you would definitely want to look at. So obviously, in terms of kind of AR and resolution, you know, every organization gets claims that are rejected by the payers. You know, are there categories of those rejections that are simple or straightforward enough that you could say when I get this rejection from this payer, here's how I respond to that. I'm going to, I need more additional information or they need a corrected claim or they need some, you know, relatively simple piece of work to move that forward and to a resolution. If you're talking about other parts of the revenue cycle, you have authorization, verifying that an authorization for services, the appropriate CPT and the date of service and the provider MPI and all that kind of information, it's an important task to ensure that you get paid, but it's very repetitive and there's a specific process that you would go through to check different data elements and validate. Same thing with potentially verifying or reverifying insurance eligibility. You know, there are steps that you go through to retrieve that data, but then there's a more complex process, which is the plan code registered in the system, the right plan code based on the benefits presented. You know, are there carveouts to the benefits that would maybe make a service the patient's responsibility instead of being covered by the insurance? So, there's that kind of next level of sophistication around taking those pieces of data and those high volume parts of the process and building out robotic process automation in order to handle those. And the AI, you know, piece, component of that is really that supervised machine learning, which is if you have kind of a decision that needs to be made by that person working that process, then if they do that over and over again through repetition, you can also teach the robotic process automation how to make that decision, which data elements to look at and really how to complete that work effort the same way that a human would do in that process.

JEFF   Recently, Meduit was approached by a client to solve a specific task. Can you share that story with us and why an AI solution was a good fit for them?

JASON   Oh, I'd love to. So this is a great example of how robotic process automation can really add the value to the work optimization. So this particular organization has a lot of claims with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina; and I'm sure everybody has a payer out there who has just kind of quirkiness or, you know, challenges with getting information around claims back and forth. And interestingly, with Blue Cross of North Carolina, they offer like a claims status EDI, 276/277 transaction, but the content of that information is not very specific. If there's a rejected or denied claim, then the 277 might say it's been rejected, but might not provide enough information in order to take the right action on that claim for resolution. So this use case that we created in the Blue Cross of North Carolina website, they actually have a very much granular reason code when you search for a claim.

> *... we created in the Blue Cross of North Carolina website, they actually have a very much granular reason code when you search for a claim. They're not the EDI standard responses. They're the payer specific codes. But that's exactly what you need in order to understand what's wrong with that claim.*
> **– Jason Petrasich**

They're not the EDI standard responses. They're the payer specific codes. But that's exactly what you need in order to understand what's wrong with that claim. Is it a coding issue? Did they not like the combination of the diagnosis and the service location? Or, you know, the procedure and the modifier; you know, what are the things that are going on with that claim that need to be fixed? So we created an automation to go out and look for these opportunities where we may have already received a response electronically from Blue Cross, but it wasn't enough content. We had to go out to the website. So we created the process to go out, navigate through the, you know, complexity of searching for a claim, finding the right claim, making sure that, you know, if you have a corrected claim or overlapping dates of service that you're actually picking the right claim and information, and bringing that back and putting that into a queue based on those specific granular reasons of actions that can be taken to resolve that claim. So in that case, we were able to create this process and deploy that relatively quickly and create this lift for the organization, getting this information back to the rev cycle team that they previously had to do manually.

JEFF   So I know as part of that process, we've created kind of this bot that we have called SARA, and one of the complaints, you know, that we've gotten from customers in the past is I don't have IT resources. This is something I'd really like to do, but I just don't have the IT resources to do another implementation right now. They're tied up. So tell our listeners a little bit about what kind of lift was required to get the SARA bot working in this particular installation you just described to us.

JASON   Yeah, absolutely. That is an area that we recognize as a challenge for the industry. So, you know, we talk about, you know, the impact of COVID on operational resources, you know, having enough employees to work through your accounts and your process. You know, there's a similar issue with IT. And, you know, the industry has always been constrained on IT

resources. So we really wanted to approach the solution in a different way. So our philosophy around this is that we're going to do everything with the robotic process automation and artificial intelligence that we do to work accounts only with user access, standard remote user access, the same access you would give to an employee that you sent to work from home because of COVID. That's exactly the same access that we'll have into the system. So there are more steps required within the RPA because we have to go through different screens within the patient accounting system and, you know, grab information off the claim, grab the provider information, that theoretically you could get that data out of a data interface. But we've chosen to go with this path because it is independent of IT resources and priorities within the organization. So we can deploy the SARA automation without requiring any IT file exchange, no testing or anything like that. All we're going to do is log in, and we're going to work accounts as if we were a real revenue cycle employee. So, you know, obviously that relieves the burden and allows the revenue cycle organization to pilot a solution like this without having to wait, you know, 6, 12, 18 months to get an IT approval and resources within the organization, and you don't have to compete with any other projects in IT. So everything in, you know, the IT teams are asked to do has a ROI to the organization, whether that's, you know, implementing new clinical systems or, you know, changing out, you know, one application for another. There's always a business reason why that's important to the organization. So this allows you to really kind of go parallel to all of that activity. It doesn't have to delay any of the other IT prioritization within your organization. The other, you know, kind of benefit of that is that there's no, you know, investment cost, right. So there's no, you don't have to hire a bunch of programmers or you don't have to build an interface and test it. You don't have to, you know, contract out to a third party to build you an interface for us to come in and grab some data. So really, also it eliminates the cost side of that, you know, as much as the resource side. So, again, our approach is all we need is remote user access, and we can do everything we need to do with that.

JEFF   That's great. What can you tell us about SARA's efficiency?

JASON   This is where it gets really exciting. So with our pilot solution that I talked about earlier with Blue Cross of North Carolina, we were able to setup SARA to start working through claims, and she was able to replicate the productivity of 12 full-time employees working every month just with this automation. So, as you can imagine, that's a huge boost to any organization. You know, this may vary depending on processes to how much of a particular process can be automated. In this case, it was fairly simple so we were able to automate a large percentage of that work that needed to be done in order to kind of achieve that 12 employee equivalent. You know, if you think about it, based on the size of your organization, what we're seeing in our pilot cases that we've worked so far is anywhere between a 20% to 40% boost in productivity. So for every 10 employees that you have working on a process, you know, SARA can be the equivalent of 2 to 4 more employees. And organizationally, you can decide whether, you know, you're backfilling lost resources due to COVID or you're going to just take advantage of that additional productivity and accelerate your cash and reduce your AR. You know, that's really kind of up to the organization to determine. But we're actually seeing some great productivity right out of the gate by deploying SARA.

JEFF   What are the main areas where you've seen AI already starting to impact the revenue cycle?

JASON   You know, we gave some examples in kind of the AR follow-up. I touched a little bit about authorizations. You know, some areas are automated coding of claims, also looking at, you know, some more of the predictive power on optimizing your work queues, whether you're talking about patient collections and optimizing that or looking at portfolio of aged AR and analyzing that to determine which are the more collectable claims within that aged AR. You know, what are the probabilities that you're going to recover that, and organizing your work queue in a way that your limited resources are actually hitting the ones that have value, and if you run out of time, the ones that you didn't get to are the ones that have the least amount of value to the organization. So really some interesting approaches to using AI and working smarter. You know, that's kind of the name of the game with COVID, is, you know, everyone is constrained on resources, so we have to be really smart about how we use the resources that we have available.

JEFF   So one of our listeners is interested in getting more information about AI and RPA and how those can solve specific issues in the revenue cycle. How would they contact Meduit AI?

JASON   Best way to reach us is through our website, **meduitrcm.com**, and click on the contact us link and let us know a little bit about what you're looking for, and we'll get right back to you. I think it's very easy to engage with us, and we look forward to talking to anybody who's interested in more information about robotic process automation and AI.

JEFF   All right. Thanks, everyone, for joining us. In our next podcast, we're going to be talking with Jason about how AI technologies can help providers make more informed decisions that accelerate the revenue cycle. We'll see you then.

Jeff Nieman, Meduit *CEO*

Mr. Nieman leads Meduit's top-notch team of healthcare revenue cycle professionals to maximize performance and accelerate growth for hospitals, health systems and provider groups. Prior to joining the Meduit team, he was the chief operating officer for Navigant Cymetrix, a revenue cycle management company serving over 200 hospitals. He has also held leadership positions at Conifer Health Solutions, Humana and HCA (Hospital Corporation of America) and has a BA in economics from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky where he graduated Magna Cum Laude.

Jason Petrasich, *Senior Vice President AI, Meduit*

Mr. Petrasich drives revenue cycle solutions powered by artificial intelligence (AI) that support healthcare providers' operational, clinical and financial health. Petrasich brings over 25 years of RCM experience in revenue cycle process design, efficiency and resource optimization. Prior to joining Meduit, he served as national vice president of revenue cycle for Prospect Medical Holdings, Inc., vice president of operations for Navigant Cymetrix, and senior director of operations planning for Conifer Health Solutions. He earned his Master of Business Administration from Pepperdine University.