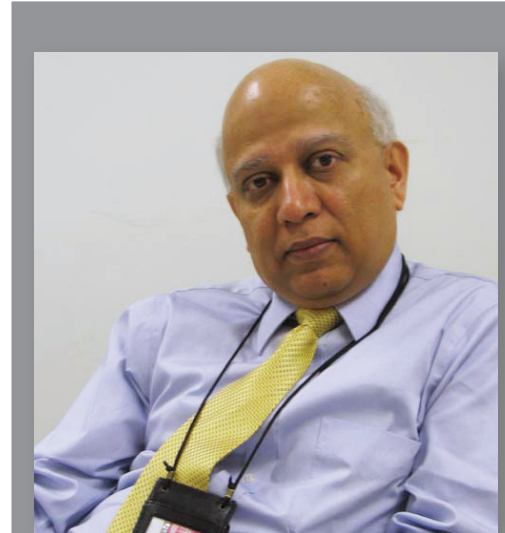# NYC Audit Team Finds 'Beauty' in Salient

Ravi Kunnakkat has one title, but he wears many hats. Officially he is the Assistant Director in OMIG's New York City Division of Medicaid Audit, and in addition to his management and administrative responsibilities, he also handles his own targeting and analysis by drawing on his deep background in IT and extensive knowledge of Medicaid data.

No matter which hat he happens to be wearing, Kunnakkat relies on a powerful software solution developed by Salient Management Company to help him work faster and more effectively than he can through New York State's massive data warehouse. "We use Salient for a whole host of things, all intended to isolate patterns of use and abuse by both providers and recipients, and to help us with specific issues," he explains.

For example, he uses Salient to analyze charges by rate code, with emphasis on averages per recipient (units, dollars, etc), and then breaks down the charges by region, providers, recipients, etc. for individual rate codes as well as collections of rate codes (OASAS, OMH, Home Care, etc.). Kunnakkat also uses the Salient tool for geographic analysis of Medicaid recipients—"where is the recipient going in relation to his or her home?"—and for providers—"where are the recipients coming from and does the travel make sense?" He even used Salient last winter to see where the recipients to a particular provider were coming from on a certain day in December when the City was at a standstill because of a severe snow storm. "I know I could not get to work that day because the streets were a mess. So I was curious," he explains. "Salient allows me to do more things on an ad hoc basis. It's easy for me to pick a specific day and not waste a lot of time looking for outliers. We can use our resources more efficiently, which is very important since NYC is OMIG's largest audit office and we have less than 100 auditors. The beauty of the product is its speed."

Ravi Kunnakkat

Most recently Kunnakkat and his team of auditors have been focusing on home care, a fast growing sector for the NYS Medicaid program. Salient helped him and his auditors to understand the cost and utilization patterns of home care providers to determine where and how to target audit actions. "When we see a provider billing thousands of dollars in a day, we then draw a statistically valid sample for that provider, and check to make sure the proper paperwork was provided by a doctor. We also look at the services that were provided. If Medicaid was billed 8 hours for a home health aide, was the aide actually there for 8 hours? And what did they do while they were there— the laundry, cooking, cleaning? The entire purpose of the audit is to make sure there is valid documentation for the services that were provided, and that the prescribed services were indeed delivered. Salient is a great help in supporting the audit process."

Kunnakkat and his team have put home health aide services squarely in their sights for good reason. For state fiscal year 2010–2011, statewide home health aide Medicaid claims, which make up the majority of home care expenses, accounted for over $1.2 billion, of which about 96% was attributed to New York City. The rate code for home health aide reimbursement is indeed showing one of the most precipitous growth patterns within the overall home care provider segment, with costs increasing 43% over the two- year period from SFY 2008–09 to 2010–11.

The NYC team also uses Salient to identify anomalies within rate codes. On a specific day in June, for example, they saw that 1,200 recipients received home care from a particular provider, and drilled deeper to find multiple recipients in a single location. That raised another issue worth exploring. As it turned out, the location of multiple recipients was an adult home, where residents generally are not eligible for home care services funded by Medicaid. "From the data I couldn't tell what type of facility this was; all I could see were the duplicate services at this one address," Kunnakkat explains. The action step was to send an auditor to the location to check the documentation. "To my surprise, some recipients had aides serving them in double shifts because about 20 people were getting 24 hours of home care. This was way above average—a reason to look deeper. It so happens there was a home health agency in the basement of this building. The point is that with Salient, we were able to very quickly identify that outlier and take the next step."

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> –Ravi Kunnakkat, OMIG, Assistant Director in NYC Division of Medicaid Audit

The NYC Audit department will be discussing with the Department of Health its "shared home health care" directive, which encourages providers who deliver services to recipients in close proximity to charge a more economical rate in areas that make sense. "Now we can better manage that process by looking more quickly at services by zip code or rate code. These ad hoc queries turn into projects that hopefully will lead to cost avoidance and cost recovery. And with Salient we are able to target providers and support the audit function much more efficiently. So let's target and crack down."

For more information on the Salient solution for Medicaid and other public sector applications, please contact Fahad Rahman at frahman@salient.com or at 571-222-4250.