

## Case Study: Gulf Coast Pathology Associates

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—Dr. Rhonda Shannon,  
President, Gulf Coast  
Pathology Associates

### **Per-Se helps Houston pathologists create a successful new practice and negotiate appropriate reimbursement for the clinical component.**

When Gulf Coast Pathology Associates (GCPA) was established during 1999, the medical group had to create a business from scratch. The ten pathologists were employees of another organization whose president was retiring and closing the doors on the practice that exclusively served St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston.

The pathologists sent an RFP to four companies to identify the best resource for billing and collections systems, coding and compliance management and managed care contract negotiation. “We were familiar with Per-Se,” explains GCPA President Dr. Rhonda Shannon, “because the company has a good reputation among local pathologists, and we had visited its exhibits at professional meetings.”

Three proposals were accepted for further review. “The cost for all three was very similar, so it was not a

cost-based decision,” says Shannon. “We wanted to determine which company could provide superior service.”

The selection process was rigorous. Each company made a presentation, and references were thoroughly checked. A committee then made on-site visits to practices where each contender provided services. In the end, Per-Se was the obvious choice, according to the GCPA president. The company's pathology service capabilities stood out for a number of reasons, particularly the account team's depth of experience.

In addition to surpassing competitors' billing and collections capabilities, she says, “Per-Se's managed care contracting and administration services were by far the strongest. We wanted to keep the contracts established by our former employer and establish new ones,” says the president

of the Houston pathology practice. "It was Per-Se's expertise in the managed care arena that led to the company's overwhelming choice as GCPA's vendor for these services." Dr. Shannon points to Per-Se's track record negotiating outstanding contracts for other pathology practices, including its ability to successfully garner reimbursement for clinical pathology. Once under contract to GCPA, the company then established an interface with St. Luke's computer systems and developed procedures to gather information electronically. The smooth transition enabled enhanced access to data and timely receipt of information to create billable charges.

In addition, the team addressed issues related to collections. "Per-Se helped us establish our processes and procedures," says Dr. Shannon. "Days in accounts receivable average only 69 days for the practice. Per-Se has the appropriate software to operate efficient billing and collections."

**"Five years ago, it would not have meant anything to me if a vendor said their people understand the entire pathology billing process. Now that I understand its complexity, I see the value in having an account team that is intimately familiar with every detail of billing and has the systems to manage it."**

*—Dr. Rhonda Shannon, President,  
Gulf Coast Pathology Associates*

Physician education and coding feedback are other aspects of service Per-Se provides. All anatomic pathology reports are reviewed for documentation accuracy to minimize compliance risk. Problems are immediately identified and addressed, and the company conducts quarterly reviews to answer questions and provide ongoing feedback. "A lot of issues arise when a pathology practice is first established," explains Dr. Shannon, "but with the complexity of our specialty, coding challenges continue to come up."

Two years after the Gulf Coast Pathology Associates began operations, the practice is operating smoothly. An eleventh physician has joined the group. "I highly recommend Per-Se," says Dr. Shannon. "Pathology coding and billing issues are very complex. Per-Se brought their experience to the table and helped us reach decisions. They were definitely the best choice."

#### **Put 25 years of pathology billing experience work for you.**

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