

Case study

Family Health Associates

From five office locations in the Lewistown, Pennsylvania area, Family Health Associates provides primary care to 1,100 patients a week.

Twenty-five providers, with specialties in pulmonology, urology, general surgery, weight management and ENT, together with 35 nurses, serve patients of all ages from birth to death. With a total staff close to 100, Family Health Associates achieved Meaningful Use in 2011.

“With MEDENT EMR, we have instant access to information,” states Dr. Cathleen Veach, M.D. and Medical Director for Family Health Associates. “Even when we’re on call at home, the medical record is at our fingertips. We make extensive use of Disease Management formulas and tracking reports for quality measures and to identify when a patient is due for a specific test or procedure. Preventative care and overall quality of patient care have improved. With the documentation interface to the hospital, we’ve also strengthened continuity of care.”

CHALLENGES

Founded in the early 90’s through the acquisition of several existing practices by Lewistown Hospital, Family Health Associates enabled a spectrum of healthcare services to remain available to the community. A practice management and EMR system was needed to help manage the diverse practices. Several systems were evaluated on multiple criteria, including existing usage, user references and total cost of ownership.

SOLUTION

MEDENT Practice Management and EMR from Community Computer Service was implemented in 2002.

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Aaron Kepner, Practice Administrator
Family Health Associates

Family Health Associates uses MEDENT's Lab Results Clearinghouse as well as the Point and Click DocGens technology and the Dragon speech recognition system. "Providers use a combination of templates, dictation and typing to document the patient's history, exam, assessment and plan," describes Dr. Veach. "How providers document varies considerably, and MEDENT allows for this flexibility and individual style preference. Nurses ensure documents are available before the provider sees a patient. For example, if a patient is coming in for hospital follow-up, all of the labs and the consultation letter are accessible in the patient note for that visit."

Physicians and Nurse Practitioners use e-prescribing and the associated drug alerts, drug-drug interaction and drug-allergy interaction. Family Health makes use of MEDENT's "flowsheets" to identify relationships among lab results, meds and vital signs and to help with Disease Management (DM). "We make extensive use of the DM formulas and DM outcome tracking reports," states Dr. Veach. "We use the tracking reports for quality measures, for the practice's quality incentive plan and to track when a patient is due for a specific test or procedure." Aaron Kepner adds that MEDENT's administrative tools enable them to understand their patient population. "The reports are very effective and help us serve patients better."

"We implemented the Patient Portal about a year ago," states Aaron. "We were able to roll it out quickly and smoothly with no problems. The Portal is easy-to-use and user friendly, with all communication well-integrated with the MEDENT system." Patients of Family Health Associates use the Patient Portal to send messages to providers with questions, to request refills, view results of tests and to check lab results. Providers have responded positively to the Portal. "It's easy to communicate with patients and to send them information," explains Dr. Veach.

Family Health Associates is doing Meaningful Use. "Implementing Meaningful Use went very smoothly," describes Aaron. "We were successful within a year. The MEDENT system provides great tools which are easy-to-use, nice aesthetically and very helpful. MEDENT has formulas you can run at any time for the whole organization. With the one-click feature of the Dashboard, you can see how providers and the whole organization are doing. Meaningful Use was new for everybody and being able to break down one quality measure at a time on the Dashboard really helped."

The MEDENT system has a significant impact on the practice. "With the use of Disease Management, we have improved the quality of care," states Dr. Veach, "and the documentation interface with the hospital has strengthened continuity of care. We've made strong improvements in preventative care through use of MEDENT's DM. Providers can take their computers home. We have instant access to information, including information on drug interaction, and we can send prescriptions to the pharmacy whether we're in the office or at home. When a physician is on call, they have the medical record at their fingertips. All of this enables us to better serve patients. Some providers have also started using MEDENT Mobile on their iphones and ipads which makes patient records even more accessible while on call."

“MEDENT has helped the overall efficiency of the office,” explains Aaron, “and we’ve completely retired paper charts. We’ve been able to get rid of filing. It’s easy to do refills, and staff is not spending time looking for documents. Also, the MEDENT patient education module is valuable in that providers can print out information for the patient, and both providers and staff have immediate access to clinical resources not readily available in the past.” Dr. Veach adds that MEDENT has improved communication. “Often in the past a triage was done verbally, and at times information was forgotten and not documented. Now the patient record is more complete.”

The relationship with Community Computer has been positive on all fronts. “From the administrative end, Community Computer’s customer service is fantastic,” states Aaron. Dr. Veach explains that for DM formulas, the support staff is very responsive. “I request a formula, and often I get one back the same afternoon.” Ron Cowan, CIO of Lewistown Hospital, who was instrumental in the original choice of MEDENT, describes the relationship between Family Health Associates and Community Computer as “very positive and a real business partnership.”

RESULTS

With MEDENT, Family Health Associates has strengthened preventative care, continuity of care and overall quality of care. Efficiency in the office has improved, communication is better and patient records are more complete. Providers have instant access to patient and clinical information from any of the practices’ five offices, from the hospital and from home. Staff no longer spend time filing or searching for paper documents.

In the future, Family Health hopes to put a computer in the waiting room to enable patients to enter their history and other information into the system through the Portal. Having already done much of what is required for certification as a Patient-Centered Medical Home, the practice is considering seeking certification in the future.