

## Case study

# Surescripts Clinical Interoperability Direct Project – Trinity Family Medicine

Located in Weedsport, New York, Trinity Family Medicine is a primary care practice serving a broad range of patients, from newborns to the elderly. The practice has used MEDENT® Practice Management and EMR for two decades. Already a participant in Surescripts® national network, MEDENT Inc. added The Direct Project feature in early 2013. Trinity Family Medicine began using the feature to exchange chart information as structured data with other physician practices.

“For the first time, it’s possible to securely interact with another physician without being on the phone and taking time away from the patient,” states Dr. Sean Boyle, M.D., physician and founder of Trinity Family Medicine. “With The Direct Project, labs and information can be exchanged electronically securely without violating HIPAA rules, and the information goes directly into the patient’s chart.”

## CHALLENGES

Dr. Boyle explains that before faxing was common, physicians typically exchanged information by telephone. Lab reports were sent via mail and had to be manually put in the right patient's chart or scanned in and attached to the patient's electronic record. Faxing and electronic communication sped up the process but the data exchanged was unstructured and did not go directly to the patient’s chart. It was a time-consuming and inefficient process.

## SOLUTION

The Direct Project enables physicians to interact about a common patient, to provide and receive

**“The primary advantage of The Direct Project is that it is a step forward in efficiency – both for physicians, staff and patients.”**

Sean Boyle, M.D., physician and founder  
Trinity Family Medicine

information and to ask and answer questions all through secure HIPAA-approved communication. The information goes directly into the patient record in each physician's EMR.

Dr. Boyle frequently makes referrals to specialists, and he uses the Direct Exchange feature in MEDENT to streamline the process. "Recently one of my patients was having difficulty breathing and also had chest pain and abdominal pain," explains Dr. Boyle. "I ordered an ultrasound which showed a gallstone in the gallbladder neck. Using Direct Exchange, I made a referral to the patient's cardiologist to gain clearance for the gallbladder surgery. When the cardiologist received the Direct Message and documents – test results, medications and previous diagnoses – his office scheduled an appointment and after the examination he gave clearance for the surgery. The information provided in the Direct Message is easy to read and quickly accessible in the patient's chart."

With Direct Exchange, information is not buried inside of a formal letter, nor conveyed by an interruptible phone call that would take up the time of both doctors and their staff. The process is a fast and efficient form of data exchange that is not cluttered and does not impede other duties of the team. "In two minutes, without having to think about it, I can take the referral from one level to the next," states Dr. Boyle. "In the past the process would have taken 15 to 20 minutes of my time."

Dr. Boyle explains that these days, in contrast to prior times, specialists require both progress notes and lab results before agreeing to accept a referral. "Using Direct, a series of documents and information is sent in a Direct Message to the specialist," describes Dr. Boyle. "The incoming reply is directly tied to the original outgoing message. The specialist lets me know they have reviewed the information and can handle it. The specialist's office sets up an appointment and lets us know the date and time so that we can track it and know when to expect results and a consult report."

## RESULTS

"The Direct Project enables efficient exchange of patient data between MEDENT EMR and the platforms used by the specialists to whom I refer," states Dr. Boyle. "And with MEDENT and Direct Exchange, I am well-positioned to meet the requirements for Meaningful Use 2."