

With Easier Access to Patient Information, Safety, Efficiency and Productivity Have Improved

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Accessing patient information and running the office efficiently using paper charts had become increasingly difficult. On November, 2006, after 21 years in practice, Dr. Fred Talarico made the transition to MEDENT EMR from Community Computer Service. With immediate access to patient information from the office or home, the Talarico practice has been able to improve patient care and become more efficient and productive. Writing prescriptions, ordering lab work and providing reports to referring physicians is quicker and easier. And patient notes are more reliable, readable and thorough.

Situation

Located in Utica, New York, the Fred L. Talarico, M.D. practice provides cardiovascular and preventative medicine services to children through adults. Founded 21 years ago by Dr. Fred Talarico, the practice sees 200 to 240 patients a week. In addition to Dr. Talarico, staff include one nurse practitioner, two LPNs and eight administrative personnel.

“The biggest challenge facing the practice today is maintaining quality of patient care in the face of insurance company restrictions,” states Dr. Talarico.

The Talarico practice began using MEDENT billing from Community Computer Service in the mid 1990s. Previously, they had used a standalone IBM system, Doctor’s Office Manager. “It was an old system which wasn’t networked,” explains Dr. Talarico, “and we needed to more adequately track patient accounting and scheduling.” The practice found MEDENT billing helpful in keying in information and maintaining an adequate billing system. Also, they were able to speed-up and increase collections.

Through the 90s and early 2000s, the Talarico practice submitted their claims electronically and used the Electronic Patients Statements service from Community Computer for the creation and mailing of patient statements, but they continued to use paper for patient records. “Running the office efficiently and finding the patient information we needed was slow and difficult,” states Dr. Talarico. “I decided it was time to move to electronic medical records (EMR).”

Solution

In October, 2006, the Talarico practice began using Community Computer’s MEDENT EMR on a full-time basis. Providers use notebook computers, and administrative staff use desktop PCs. All are fully networked, enabling easy communication within the office, from the home, and with referring physicians and such locations as their laboratory and pharmacies.

The practice uses the Lab Results Clearinghouse which enables them to automatically route lab information to and from the Centrex Lab. They use the point & click DocGens technology and have a Medical Content Library tailored to the practice. The Talarico practice uses document scanning and imaging, and in the future they plan to use a digital camera for patient identification.

“With EMR, when I see a patient, information about the patient is right there,” explains Dr. Talarico. “We’ve been able to improve patient care through greater safety in that we can readily access a patient’s med information and also check if they have any allergies. If I access the system from home, I have access to all of the same information. I like the way the med lists are kept, and the e-prescription capability saves time in that I don’t have to call the pharmacy. Overall, we’re more productive in many areas, including writing prescriptions and ordering lab work.”

Providers complete their documentation of patient visits while still with the patient. They document using point & click on templates and also enter some information through the keyboard. “My notes are more reliable,” states Dr. Talarico, “and they’re more readable by other staff members.” Since implementing EMR, the Talarico practice has increased the thoroughness of documentation. While they haven’t been audited in the last several years, Dr. Talarico expects that audit results will improve over what they had been in earlier years with paper charts.

Before EMR, getting reports back to referring physicians typically took several days. Staff had to print out the report and send it through external mail. “EMR has definitely expedited getting reports out to referring physicians,” explains Dr. Talarico. “Now when the report is complete, we send it directly over the network.”

The Talarico practice has moved from paper charts to EMR in an evolutionary way. All patients who have been seen since the practice moved to EMR have electronic records, since before patients are seen, staff scan information into the electronic system from the old paper chart. Also, electronic records are set up for new patients before they come for their first appointment. In all instances, providers have immediate access to electronic information about the patient while examining the patient.

“Our overall experience with Community Computer has been very good,” states Dr. Talarico. “Willy, our trainer, has been extremely helpful and he has tweaked the system to what we need.” The practice has found it valuable to be able to rely on a single vendor for all the software, hardware, networking and support.

Benefits

“The most significant way the MEDENT system has impacted the practice is that it’s easier to access patient records,” comments Dr. Talarico. With immediate access to patient information from the office or home, the Talarico practice has been able to improve patient care as well as become more efficient and more productive in such areas as writing prescriptions, ordering lab work and providing reports back to referring physicians. Patient notes are more reliable, readable and thorough.

With EMR, finding information about a patient's current and past medications and about any allergies is quick and easy, resulting in greater safety and better patient care. Providers' notes are readily accessible to others in the practice. Prescriptions are entered directly into the MEDENT system and sent over the network to the pharmacy. There is no longer need to spend time making calls to the pharmacy or concern about the legibility of handwritten prescriptions.

Ordering lab work takes less time for providers. and sending information to and from the lab is faster. Getting reports back to referring physicians is immediate over the network compared to sending it through external mail, which took several days.

"We're getting more and more efficient in our use of the system," states Dr. Talarico, " and we'll achieve even better integration in the future."