

Case study

Multi-location Nephrology Practice

Located in Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh-based nephrology practice services 200 to 250 patients a week whose average age ranges from 60 to 80. Operating from seven locations, eight physicians and a physician assistant evaluate, diagnose and treat diseases of the kidney and urinary system.

“When Meaningful Use first came out,” states Linda Smith, computer consultant to the nephrology practice, “I thought I would have to figure it out myself. Then MEDENT came along with a well-written, clear and concise instruction manual. MEDENT’s Meaningful Use tools enable us to learn exactly where each of our eight physicians stands in terms of achieving meaningful use goals and what each needs to do to reach them.”

CHALLENGES

Founded in 1978, the nephrology practice developed an in-house medical records system and used standalone billing software. To provide the best possible patient care, physicians in the practice did extensive analysis of patient data. Over the years, substantial data was accumulated. By 2008, it was clear certifiable software was required in order to move forward. The search began for a product which would enable them to use their existing data and speech recognition software as well as interface electronically with lab companies.

SOLUTION

In 2009, the nephrology practice implemented MEDENT Practice Management and EMR from Community Computer Service.

“We use MEDENT’s Disease Management formulas, and the Meaningful Use Dashboard enables us to evaluate results in easily read pie charts.”

Linda Smith, Computer Consultant
Pittsburgh nephrology practice

MEDENT software enabled the practice to interface electronically with major laboratories and hospital labs through MEDENT's Lab Results Clearinghouse. "This is critical for the practice," states Linda, "since providing quality care for nephrology patients requires careful monitoring of kidney function. Since many physicians' decisions are based on lab reports, getting results with speed and accuracy is key. Now, results are often available the same day."

The practice also uses the Electronic Patient Statements service from Community Computer for the creation and mailing of electronic patient statements and submits claims electronically to insurers. They have a Medical Content Library tailored for the practice and make extensive use of MEDENT's speech recognition software, based on Dragon, as was their earlier software.

All eight of the nephrology practice's physicians use MEDENT's e-prescribing and the associated drug alert, drug-drug interaction and drug-allergy interaction capabilities. Linda explains that before MEDENT, doctors used printed exam sheets during patient visits and recorded additional notes after the exam. The exam data was then manually entered by the staff. "Initially there was some hesitation and anxiety with use of laptops and recording of exam notes during the session. However, now both doctors and patients are very comfortable, and at the end of the visit, items such as letters and prescriptions are complete."

"Every day the physicians rely on MEDENT's Disease Management (DM) "flow sheets" to graph lab results and meds," describes Linda. "The flow sheets are customized for kidney care and are a major time saver. The practice uses the DM formulas extensively, we have standard reports we run quarterly."

"The Meaningful Use tools enable us to learn exactly where each of the eight physicians stands in terms of achieving goals such as the percent for e-prescribing and percent of demographics completed. When a physician falls short of the goal, I'm able to tell him or her exactly what they need to do and how to fix it. MEDENT makes all of this possible."

"To monitor meaningful use without MEDENT would take a full-time person," states Linda. "Data on each physician would have to be constructed manually. I'd have to create 15 reports for each doctor every 90 days. MEDENT does this all automatically. I run one report for all the doctors and can easily drill down to whatever level of detail is needed."

Before MEDENT, the practice used packaged billing software. "At the end of the day, we would send over the billing codes, and the billing staff re-entered the codes into the billing system," explains Linda. "There were two databases, and errors would occur because of differences in the databases such as a patient's middle name or new insurance information. Now everything is integrated. Everyone is using the same data."

"Our administrative staff is more efficient. Previously, when a letter needed to be sent to another practice, data had to be entered manually and the letter was printed, signed and then faxed to the other practice. Now it's done with the push of a button. Fewer data entry people are needed, and training new employees is

so much better streamlined. Also, MEDENT is so easy to use and understand and so intuitive. There is consistency in how each screen functions.”

“The staff support at Community Computer is phenomenal! All of the staff is professional and knowledgeable. Judi, in Community Computer’s DM department, has been extremely helpful in training me to write reports and the tech support staff is a pleasure. I call them all of the time.”

RESULTS

Areas where MEDENT has had a dramatic impact on the nephrology practice include the lab interface and billing. Getting accurate lab results quickly into the hands of the physicians has enabled the practice to better achieve one of its founder’s primary goals: providing the best possible patient care. With an integrated system, billing is more efficient and accurate. Staff no longer needs to re-enter billing codes at the end of the day.

MEDENT’s Meaningful Use tools have enabled the practice to be in the forefront of implementation and to be prepared for future Meaningful Use requirements. “Through MEDENT’s Meaningful Use tools,” explains Linda, “I am confident of our ability to meet the requirements and prove our eligibility.”

“We have plans to begin using MEDENT’s Patient Portal. We are also evaluating the process of hospital rounds and how that can be integrated into MEDENT.”