

## Case study

# The Wright Center for Primary Care – Mid Valley Medical Home

Located in Archbald, Pennsylvania, The Wright Center for Primary Care – Mid Valley Medical Home (WCPC-MVP) cares for 6,500 patients, many of whom are members of multi-generational families and range in age from newborns to the very elderly. Five primary care physicians (FT= 4.0), one nurse practitioner, three physician assistants, four LPN nurses, an RN Care Manager and a Social Worker see approximately 500 patients a week. Together with continuity residents from The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education and students of other healthcare disciplines who rotate through the center, the staff provides comprehensive primary medical services.

In addition, a nurse practitioner sees children at the Scranton Maternal Health Services Center, and a physician assistant sees patients at a Lackawanna College student health center and provides employee wellness at Northeast PA Blue Cross. Total staff at WCPC-MVP is 32. In 2011, The Wright Center achieved Meaningful Use and NCQA certification as a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home.

## CHALLENGES

The practice was founded by current Wright Center President/CEO Linda Thomas-Hemak, M.D., in 1999. It was donated to the Wright Center for Medical Education in 2002. Recognizing the trend to EMR, the combined medical education and care delivery organization began using MEDENT Practice Management and EMR from Community Computer Service in 2004. In 2011, The Wright Center began use of the MEDENT patient portal.

“After only 90 days, the Patient Portal helped us become more efficient and had a positive impact on patient engagement and care delivery,”

states Dr. Jignesh Sheth, M.D., primary care academic physician at The Wright Center. “Phone calls have declined, replaced by messages over the Portal which can be better managed and tracked. Exchanges over the Portal are concise and documented in the EMR. Also, I was able to provide care to a patient in a foreign country.”

## SOLUTION

The Wright Center for Primary Care uses the Lab Results Clearinghouse. They use menu choices and point and click to document patient visits, with no entry of free text. The practice’s EKG and spirometry equipment is directly interfaced with MEDENT. Providers use e-prescribing and the associated drug alert, drug-drug interaction, drug-allergy, Surescripts and PA Vaccine Registry import capabilities.

“We make extensive use of the Disease Management (DM) formulas which are specific to the clinician’s role on the team. We have about 100 formulas in use for our three clinics,” explains Tiffany Elkins, MEDENT Application Specialist at The Wright Center. “The DM formulas define our team-based workflow. The medical assistants use specific DM formulas with patients before the doctor enters the office. The doctor assesses and adjusts the formulas, and residents print out due items before they go in to see a patient. The DM formulas are forever changing. For example, we have ones specific for Medicare and various insurers that accommodate new guidelines for wellness promotion or high risk times of care transitions. Dr. Sheth creates clinical decision support and evidence-based guidelines and puts them in to team-role-specific DM formulas.”

“We have about 100 Disease Management formulas that define our workflow which is focused on excellent evidence-based care and continual quality improvement.”

Tiffany Elkins, MEDENT  
Application Specialist  
The Wright Center for Primary Care

“Remembering to cover dozens of areas and maintain lean workflow is not something physicians are typically able to do without IT support,” states Dr. Sheth. “Also, we use the DM feature to graph items such as lab results, meds and vital signs and give a printed snapshot to the patient.”

The Wright Center makes extensive use of MEDENT’s DM tracking reports. The practice has a care manager and a social worker who focus on several chronic diseases. They use the DM tracking reports every day to make sure that patients get the care they need and that overall management of the patient population is promoted. As a Medical Home, the practice functions as a team, with the case manager and social worker reaching out to high risk patients.

The practice began introducing the Patient Portal to patients in the middle of 2011. “When a patient comes in who has not yet been introduced to the Portal, we give them an activation letter as well as a brochure,” describes Dr. Sheth. “We have an ongoing ‘Why call when you can click campaign?’ and a generic support e-mail on our website. Patients e-mail their questions and the receptionist is able to respond to most of them. If further input is needed, the e-mail is forwarded to a nurse or a provider.”

“By ninety days after introduction, about 65 percent of my patients and 45 percent of the center’s patients had activated and used the Portal,” explains Dr. Sheth. “I have patients from age 14 to age 78 who use the Portal. I thought older patients wouldn’t use it but I’ve found that people 65 and above use it more extensively than younger patients. In some instances, caregivers for patients in their 90’s use it on the patients’ behalf. Since it’s only when patients come for appointments that they are introduced to the Portal, about a year from now we’ll have even higher engagement and a more valid assessment.”

“Prior to the Portal, patients would phone, messages would go from the secretary to the nurse and then to the doctor,” states Dr. Sheth. “First response was challenging. The phones have always been a source of both patient and provider frustration, and an individual exchange with the doctor was not typical. With the Portal, patients can reach out and get one-on-one with the doctor. I like being able to look up information in the chart and think about what to advise before responding. Patient safety is enhanced.”

“Patients also use the Portal to update their history and request medication refills,” continues Dr. Sheth. “I send messages to patients about their lab results, and patients are able to look at the results. We log calls, and even at this early stage the number of calls has gone down. Calls to me have decreased by about 50 percent. We are excited that in the future patients will be able to establish care in our practice through the Portal prior to their first visit.”

“The Portal has had a positive impact on patient care in arenas of safety, quality and satisfaction,” states Dr. Sheth. “I had a young female patient who was going abroad to study for a year. She was concerned about how she could get medical care. I urged her to sign up for the Portal. Within the first week of her arrival in the foreign country, she sent me a message describing symptoms of a urinary tract infection and questioned what she should do. She had taken antibiotics with her, but none was the right medicine for an UTI infection. I sent her clear instructions and a prescription over the Portal which she was able to print out and have filled within two hours of her message to me.”

“The tight integration of the Portal with the MEDENT system is very valuable,” states Dr. Sheth. “Whether an exchange with a patient is on the phone or in e-mail, it has to be documented. With a Portal message the exchange is secure and already documented in the MEDENT EMR. It eliminates duplicate documentation work.”

Dr. Sheth, his colleagues and staff at the Wright Center for Primary Care have been very happy with their overall experience with MEDENT. “The customer service and support is fantastic!” exclaims Dr. Sheth. “We are very happy with

the service and the functionality of the software. Also, when I went for training, I was pleased that a senior manager of the company was very receptive and welcoming.”

## RESULTS

The MEDENT system has significantly impacted The Wright Center for Primary Care in the areas of documentation, information access and metrics to drive workflow and continuous quality improvement. “Documentation is much easier compared to paper,” comments Dr. Sheth, “and being able to access the EMR from multiple locations provides tremendous flexibility. We can access the system from home and on our cell phones as well as in the office.”

Providers, administrative staff and patients have reacted positively to the Portal. The number of phone calls has declined, and staff can better manage their communication with patients, resulting in increased efficiency and productivity.

In fall 2012, The Wright Center for Primary Care Mid Valley received national recognition as a top practice for innovations in primary care by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Learning from Effective Ambulatory Practices. The Wright Center’s referral tracking to promote effective care coordination was particularly highlighted. This accomplishment was enabled by MEDENT’s referral tracking and office communication software which promotes better care coordination.

“In the future I’m eager to have access to MEDENT through touch and tablets,” states Dr. Sheth, “whether it be the iPad, Google pad or the upcoming Windows 8 pads for touch.”

