

Case Study >>>>

High-volume oncology practice improves workflow with a robust NextGen technology solution

Oncology is one of the most complex medical specialties—from both clinical and revenue cycle management perspectives. Cancer drugs are some of the most expensive pharmaceuticals on the market, treatment frequency per patient is high, and payers change billing rules often. With reimbursement parameters varying widely among payers and from drug to drug, there's ample opportunity to overlook small details that result in claims rejections. Timely, error-free claims management with oncology-specific editing capability is paramount.

This demanding environment requires a robust system—one capable of handling more than the limited oncology-specific requirements that niche-specific vendors provide. As a result, Oncology Hematology Care (OHC) sought an integrated electronic health records (EHR) and electronic practice management software solution from a trusted technology partner. OHC wanted a solution designed to deliver the critical features that niche oncology vendors provide—such as oncology-specific drug claims edits and clinical pathways support—while also delivering strong data access and integration, the power to handle high patient volumes, the capability to help streamline workflow, and the tools to resolve a large number of claims.



Overview

PRACTICE

Oncology Hematology Care of Greater Cincinnati

PRACTICE PROFILE

From 18 locations in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, OHC treats thousands of patients each week for cancer and blood disorders. With 36 medical oncologists, 10 radiation oncologists, a CT scanner, PET scanner, and multiple linear accelerators, OHC is the region's largest cancer care provider.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

OHC needed an EHR and practice management solution robust enough to handle a high volume of patients and claims, but flexible enough to support oncology-specific needs.

BUSINESS SOLUTION

NextGen® Ambulatory EHR and NextGen® Practice Management have the flexibility to easily adapt to an oncology practice, plus superior workflow control, ease of use, and data mining capability.

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Flexible reports and templates
- Single, integrated database
- Background Business Processor (BBP) for pre-scheduling routine, labor-intensive tasks
- Capable of close integration with clinical systems

CLIENT BENEFITS

- Promotes better communication among staff and with patients
- More responsive patient care
- Ability to easily identify clinical trends
- Oncology-specific claims editing
- Patient-friendly scheduling
- Improved revenue cycle management

NEXTGEN
HEALTHCARE

From 18 locations in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, OHC's 36 medical oncologists and 10 radiation oncologists treat thousands of patients each week for cancer and blood disorders, resulting in thousands of claims processed each week. In early 2007, the sheer volume of activity was straining the practice's existing EHR solution.

There were also workflow inefficiencies, notably in managing chemotherapy symptom calls. As each call came in, the OHC call center would manually log the details into a spreadsheet organized by physician. Message summaries would be forwarded—again manually—to each physician's covering nurse clinician, who would then need to track the oncologist and enter the applicable information in the patient's chart. Between double data entry and the verbal hand-offs, the margin for error was high, and with up to 750 calls a day, nurses were overwhelmed. In addition, useful data mining was difficult. If physicians wanted to link symptoms with treatment plans, they had to pore over hundreds of paper charts.

"Our symptom call management process worked, but we knew it could be much more efficient," says Nick Recker, OHC Chief Information Officer. "We needed automation to strengthen it, as well as other core activities."

"When we drilled down into competitive solutions' features, we found that their day-to-day processes, workflow controls, and data access fell short. On the other hand, NextGen Healthcare's templates and reports were easily modified for oncology, plus they offered superior ability to control routine workflow and access and mine data."

Nick Recker
Chief Information Officer
Oncology Hematology Care of Greater Cincinnati

Thorough selection process, aggressive timeline

In mid-2007, a selection team headed by Recker began identifying core OHC objectives and aligning them with processes the team felt could be improved by automation. The committee initially focused on 10 EHR and practice management systems, including MOSAIQ and Varian. After online demos and exhaustive functionality reviews, the field narrowed to five candidates for on-site demos.

NextGen Healthcare—which earned an on-site demo slot—stood apart from competitors because of its flexible, user-friendly custom reports and single, stable database. The selection team was particularly impressed with the system's Background Business Processor's (BPP) ability to pre-schedule routine, labor-intensive tasks for automatic completion.

"When we drilled down into competitive solutions' features, we found that their day-to-day processes, workflow controls, and data access fell short," says Recker. "On the other hand, NextGen Healthcare's templates and reports were easily modified for oncology, plus they offered superior ability to control routine workflow and access and mine data. Based on that, we recommended the NextGen® Ambulatory EHR and NextGen® Practice Management solution."

In December 2007, the OHC board approved the decision and set an aggressive implementation timeline. By early 2009, the practice was live on both NextGen Ambulatory EHR and NextGen Practice Management, after experiencing a smooth transition from the previous system. The selection team recommended a "clean cut" Accounts/Receivable strategy and a period of dual claims submissions, after first checking to make sure payers would allow it. Without interrupting patient care, OHC also trained more than 500 employees in sessions specialized by job function.

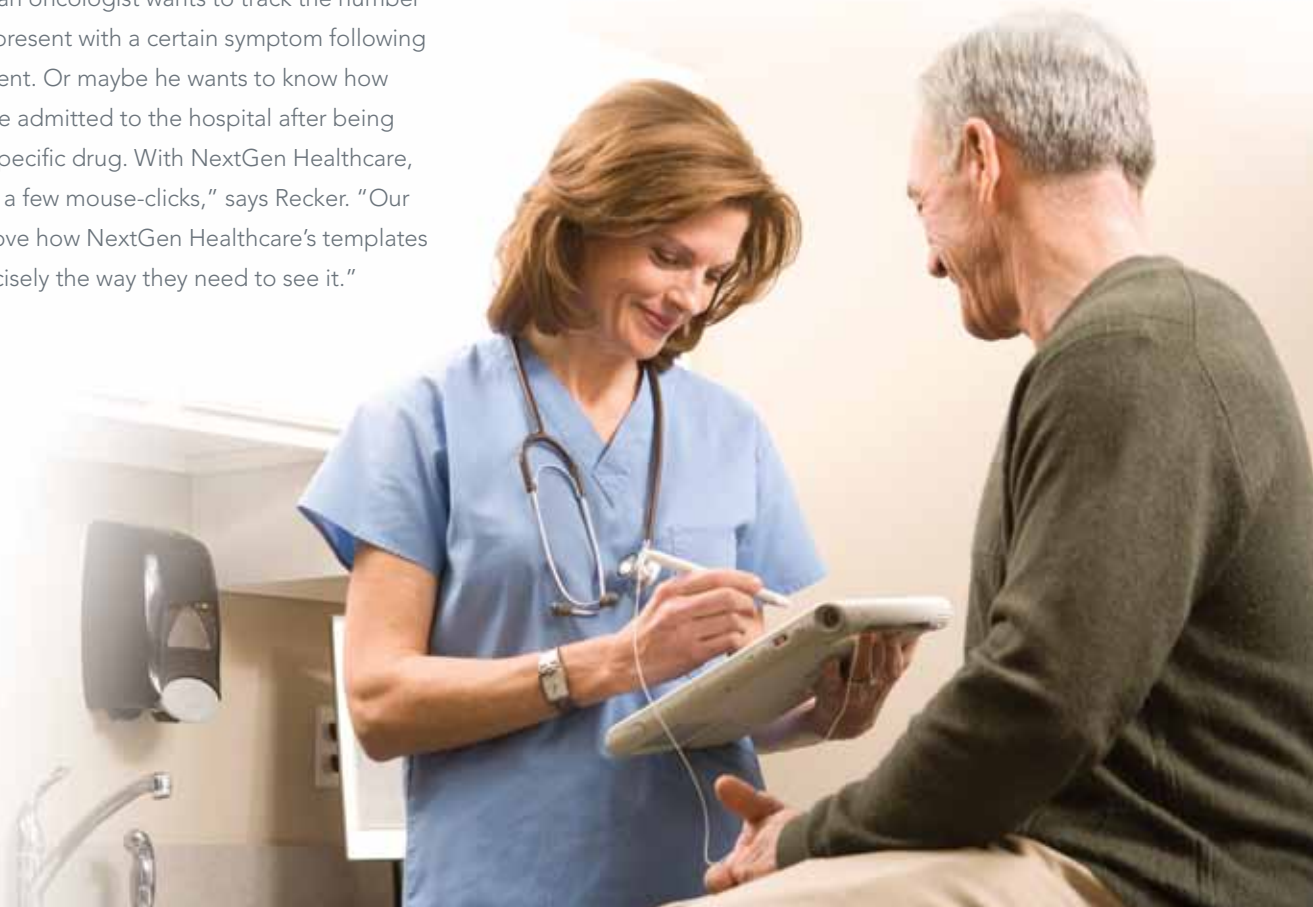
Powerful tools significantly enhance patient care

Today, the general purpose spreadsheet software OHC had used to track symptom calls is gone, replaced by a communication template within the EHR that dramatically improves efficiency, as well as the accuracy of information transfer between caregivers. The template prompts call center staff with customized, symptom-specific questions and captures all data in real time, electronically forwarding it to the appropriate nurse clinician and automatically entering it in the patient's chart. A customized task aging report ensures all incoming calls and resulting patient follow-up tasks are handled promptly—and don't mistakenly "fall through the cracks." When a patient calls, whether for a refill or any other reason, the template ages each task and alerts the call center to contact the appropriate nurse if the task isn't resolved within a specified timeframe.

Just as important, physicians can easily mine the data to identify trends and quickly link symptoms to treatment plans. "Let's say an oncologist wants to track the number of patients who present with a certain symptom following a specific treatment. Or maybe he wants to know how many patients are admitted to the hospital after being administered a specific drug. With NextGen Healthcare, he can do it with a few mouse-clicks," says Recker. "Our physicians also love how NextGen Healthcare's templates display data precisely the way they need to see it."

What's more, they're enthusiastic about NextGen Ambulatory EHR's seamless integration with radiology, lab, and other clinical systems, including medication management. Integral to any busy oncology practice, chemotherapy management software automates complex chemotherapy order entry and administration information while minimizing the potential for negative interactions between pharmaceuticals. In addition to medication data, physicians also can access patient data (including stage of treatment, insurance coverage, and other records) at the time of treatment, thanks to an interface between NextGen Ambulatory EHR and OHC's chemotherapy management solution.

NextGen Practice Management delivers scheduling capabilities, powerful enough to manage multiple locations, providers, and equipment resources, simplifying the burden of scheduling according to patient preference. An Appointment Search Ahead™ tool allows office staff to automatically scan across hundreds of resources quickly to pin down the appointment that best fits a patient's needs.



Oncology-specific claims editing

NextGen Ambulatory EHR allows OHC to easily manage oncology-specific claims issues. For example, it allows clean separation of claims and charges for multiple encounters with the same patient in a single day. And, as is often the case, if a particular payer requires a drug claim to include a lab value for reimbursement—such as a hemocrit, for example—OHC has created a custom claims edit to make sure all appropriate fields are populated before the claim goes out.

“This is a huge benefit for us,” says Recker. “When you are talking about high-dollar drugs, multiple payer rules, and thousands of transactions a week, the dollars at stake can really add up.”

Other custom reports help OHC gather the data they need to counter pressure from payers to use proven treatment plans and document real-world patient outcomes. Because

the EHR and practice management solution share the same, integrated database, it’s easy to marry clinical and financial data to show payers positive outcomes from a given clinical treatment path. With this data, OHC can negotiate reimbursement for nonstandard treatment plans with proven positive outcomes.

From a clinical and productivity standpoint, OHC has always been a high-performance organization. With NextGen Healthcare, it has built more efficient processes across the practice, from patient care to scheduling and claims management.

“With a broad spectrum of content—including oncology—NextGen Healthcare proved to be a far better choice than an oncology-specific niche vendor’s solution,” concludes Recker. “It has more flexibility, better access to data, and is far easier to customize, even for a small practice.”

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HEALTHCARE

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