

# Case Study >>>

## Orthopedic Clinic Eliminates Documentation Challenges with EHR, EPM, and ICS Technology

Treating patients at Hays Orthopaedic Clinic, PA (HOC) became increasingly time- and labor-intensive as a result of its continued reliance on a paper-based medical record system. Existing documentation methods were not adequately supporting the clinic's evaluation and management (E&M) coding. Plus, HOC faced potential audit concerns and needed to improve days in A/R.

What's more, HOC experienced delays in its communications with referral physicians and colleagues—especially while waiting for transcription information. “It was frequently over two weeks before a patient encounter was documented and placed in the chart—even with two full transcriptionists on staff and transcription services outsourced to two additional transcriptionists. This frustrated referral physicians and patients because it delayed insurance authorization and the delivery of care. Therefore, we knew we needed to accelerate the turn-around time for communications,” explains Brad Rea, Practice Administrator and practicing Physician Assistant at HOC.

To address these growing challenges and concerns, Hays began researching technology solutions that could help improve overall efficiencies through better documentation.

### Overview

#### PRACTICE

Hays Orthopaedic Clinic, PA  
Hays, KS  
[www.haysortho.com](http://www.haysortho.com)

#### PRACTICE PROFILE

Hays Orthopaedic Clinic, PA is a specialty clinic providing a wide range of orthopedic services, including treatment of fractures and dislocations, reconstructive surgery, treatment of arthritis, and more.

#### BUSINESS PROBLEM

As existing paper documentation methods failed to keep up with demands, treating patients became time- and labor-intensive. Internal audit exposed significant E&M coding risk.

#### SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EPM, EHR, and ICS software in order to streamline office administration, improve patient documentation, and enhance the quality of patient care.

#### PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Improved, more secure, patient data access
- Orthopedic-specific content and modules
- Better clinical documentation and coding
- Comprehensive interfacing

#### BENEFITS

- Improved processes by eliminating paper
- Automated document generation/reporting
- Increased revenue/condensed operating costs
- Decreased non-clinical headcount
- Reduced transcription expenses
- Enhanced patient care
- Improved credibility



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## Finding an integrated solution for maximum impact

After its initial rounds of research on electronic health record (EHR) and enterprise practice management (EPM) solutions, Hays realized how significantly this type of solution could help improve organizational efficiencies and enable its staff to provide better patient care.

In order to gain relevant information about various EHR/EPM options, a HOC physician became a member of the Healthcare Information and Management System Society (HIMSS)—an organization focused on providing leadership for the optimal use of healthcare information technology and management systems. In addition, the HOC staff networked extensively with other orthopedic groups while conducting independent research.

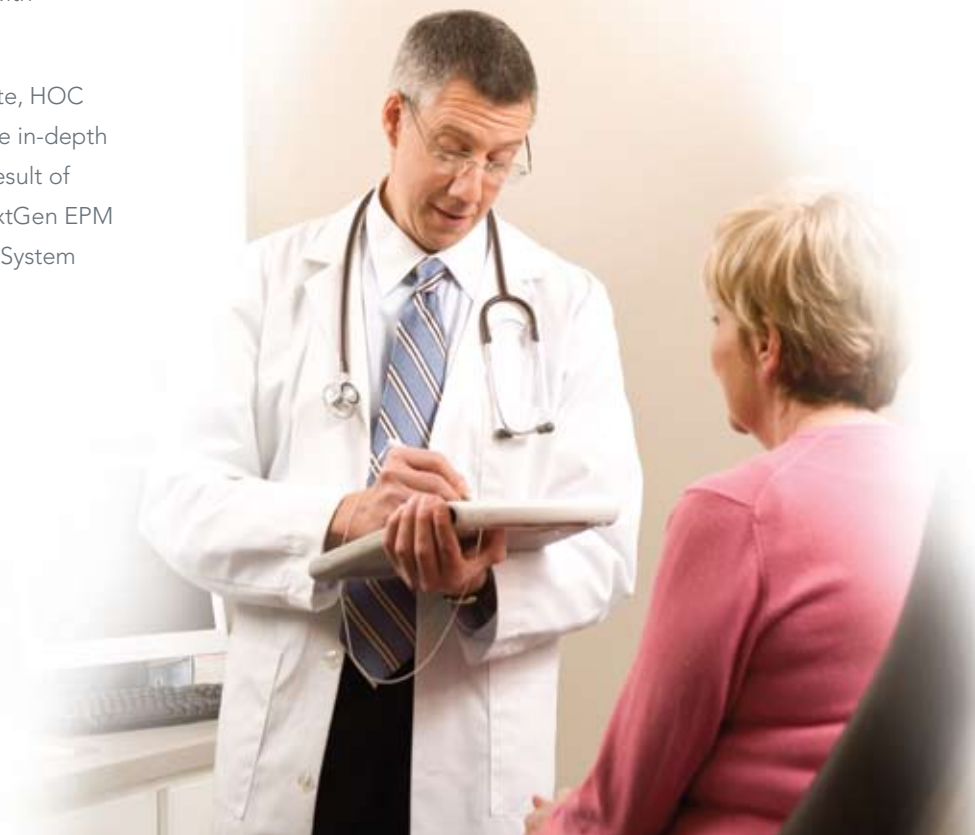
As its investigation progressed, HOC determined that it wanted one integrated database for practice management and EHR capabilities. “It was critical that any new system deliver documentation quality on par with dictation. We liked the idea of a template-based EHR provided by a company with a mature track record of success with orthopedic practices,” explains Rea.

Once the initial rounds of research were complete, HOC developed a list of four vendors to evaluate more in-depth and invite on-site for live demonstrations. As a result of that process, HOC chose NextGen EHR and NextGen EPM software—along with a NextGen Image Control System (ICS)—as its comprehensive solution.

## Choosing a highly efficient—and paperless—solution

HOC went live with NextGen EPM software in early 2005 and implemented the NextGen EHR system in late 2005. “NextGen EPM—which is fully integrated with NextGen EHR—streamlined front and back office administration, improved efficiencies, reduced A/R days, and enhanced the quality of our patient care,” explains Rea. NextGen EHR features user-friendly tools that allow fast and easy customization of workflow and content options. “With our new EHR, documenting encounters is efficient and paperless,” says Rea.

The final element of the HOC solution—NextGen ICS—is fully integrated with NextGen EPM and NextGen EHR systems. “This system indexes, stores, and manages all of our scanned documents within the NextGen system. All images are stored in a central library, enabling our users to quickly search for and locate images. Successfully capturing and archiving images is vital to every orthopedic practice,” comments Rea.



## Gaining revenue and cost savings along with better patient care—via improved efficiencies

In choosing NextGen software, HOC eliminated its paper records and realized a dramatic improvement in efficiency.

The clinic achieved the following key benefits as a result of its partnership with NextGen Healthcare:

### *Reduced expenses and increased cash flow*

Since implementing its NextGen solution, HOC increased medical revenue (per full-time doctor) by \$281,763, and reduced total operating costs (per physician) by \$64,534. HOC created new revenue-producing space by converting chart storage areas into open MRI space, and a room for a durable medical equipment distribution project.

The clinic reduced non-clinical headcount by 34% and reduced transcription expenses by \$31,473 per physician. “We’ve had significant monetary benefits. NextGen EHR and NextGen EPM software, as well as hardware, come at a capital cost and some ongoing costs, but when we look at our ability to code correctly compared to old paper world, we were under-coding about 40% of the time. We’re now able to code correctly. Plus, now that we’re coding correctly, we determined that we actually made money off of our technology investment to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars,” says HOC doctor, Gregory A. Woods.

### *Upgraded efficiencies, communication, and accessibility*

HOC improved its turn-around time for communication with referral physicians and colleagues. Now, the documentation from a patient encounter is faxed to the referral physician from the exam room using the NextGen system. The referral physician can get the results of the encounter within minutes of completing the encounter. “Physicians are happier because they get critical information faster; patients are happier because services are authorized from their insurance carrier sooner, surgery gets scheduled in a more expedient fashion, and their issues are resolved in a timely manner,” explains Rea.

Dr. Woods continues, “The biggest benefit of transitioning from a paper system to an electronic one is how much better organized we are. I remember the old days in the paper office—using all the little sticky notes, or having a stack of messages I’d have to review. With NextGen WorkLog manager, I can access information directly—and handle/dole out tasks from one place. It’s really cut down on our clutter and eliminated inefficiency. Plus, I can make notes or issue tasks at any time I have a spare moment—such as between patients. My wife loves the NextGen system almost as much or more than me, because I get home at 5:30 PM or 6:00 PM now, instead of 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM after dictation. So, I save several hours a day.”

Rea concludes, “Our doctors travel frequently to community hospitals in our region for outreach clinics, so we needed an EHR that we could access from any location where we were providing services. NextGen afforded us the opportunity to do that. We don’t have to take the charts out of the practice—we just need an internet connection. That’s been a huge improvement in efficiency and risk management because records never leave our premises.”

### *Enhanced patient care*

As a result of going virtually paperless, HOC physicians can spend more time with patients—and less time documenting visits. Dr. Woods explains, “There’s certainly the perception by patients that they are getting better care because we are answering their questions quicker. Today, I can spend more time with the patient, rather than on documenting the visit. And because we’re able to generate customized referral letters quickly, patient care happens faster.”

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### Improved credibility

Because of HOC's location in a remote area of western Kansas, it faces challenges recruiting and retaining surgeons. Rea comments, "It can be tough to get past some preconceived notions about rural environments, but we are practicing highly sophisticated medicine here. Our IT systems are on par with larger cities and more metro areas. One of the things that I've heard commented on when hosting recruits is how impressed they are with our high level of technological expertise. As a result of implementing NextGen software, we feel that we'll be able to recruit a better caliber of physician. Information systems are important—and recruits are going to be pleasantly surprised by what they see at HOC."

### Securing a partnership focused on outstanding service

The partnership between NextGen and Hays has been mutually beneficial from the start. Rea explains, "From the very first conversations we had with NextGen Healthcare, it was evident that the company understood the unique concerns and issues involved in running an orthopedic business. We felt very comfortable with NextGen Healthcare experts and we were very pleased to discover that orthopedic surgeons were involved in the development of the NextGen software database."

Rea continues, "As we continue to work with NextGen Healthcare and get to know the team, it has been enlightening to see that our feedback is utilized to create ongoing enhancements—such as in the surgery scheduling templates, physical therapy order templates, injection templates, and upgrades in the orthopedic knowledge base. By evolving the content using our feedback, NextGen EHR has become a mutually beneficial resource."

HOC has been so pleased with its NextGen Healthcare partnership, the clinic has happily served as an ongoing host site for prospective NextGen Healthcare clients.

Dr. Woods concludes, "After a failed attempt with another EHR product, I learned that the service aspect is critical. The thing I love about the NextGen Healthcare orthopedic specialists is their responsiveness to our ideas, to our questions, to our suggestions—and the growth and maturity of the knowledge base is a product of that. NextGen Healthcare actually listens to end users. We've been extremely satisfied with the support, training, and responsiveness of our chosen solution," concludes Dr. Woods.


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For full information about the features and functions of NextGen Healthcare's products and services, please contact us at [www.nextgen.com/contact](http://www.nextgen.com/contact).

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