

Case Study >>>>

Medical Practice Sees Great Efficiencies with EHR and EPM Systems

If you have 40,000 patients coming to you for medical care at one time or another, you better be organized and efficient. If you don't have these qualities, you are likely losing potential revenue, wasting time and resources, and have too many people working in your office.

For Heart & Family Health Institute (HFHI) of Port St. Lucie, Florida, it almost came to this. They were growing quickly and were seeing signs of disorganization—lost charts, poor communication, uncompleted tasks, and increased claims rejections.

They needed to reorganize and reengineer before things got out of hand, and central to their reorganization plan was the implementation of an electronic health record system as well as a practice management system superior to their current version.

After nearly a year-long search, they were delighted to find one vendor that could provide a high quality product for both systems. The vendor was NextGen Healthcare Information Systems, Inc. and the products were NextGen EHR and NextGen EPM software.



Overview

PRACTICE

Heart & Family Health Institute
Port St. Lucie, FL
www.heartandfamilyhealthinstitute.com

PRACTICE PROFILE

A multi-specialty practice of 28 board certified physicians and extensive diagnostic and treatment facilities.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

An expanding practice with paper medical charts and an inferior practice management system had created a disorganized, inefficient office.

SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EHR and NextGen® EPM software in 2003 and documented 64 separate process improvements.

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Knowledge Base Models for Primary Care and other specialties
- Task management
- Robust reporting
- Health maintenance

BENEFITS

- Complete transcription savings
- Stronger documentation and coding
- Smaller staff needed
- Happier, healthier patients

NEXTGEN
HEALTHCARE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Efficiency the Goal

With efficiency in mind, HFHI made sure they implemented and were trained in all features the systems had to offer, to take advantage of all of the features designed into the product to help a practice become more productive, to streamline their processes, and to communicate better.

And before long, HFHI had documented 64 separate process improvements directly attributable to the new systems, which led to a far more organized, calmer office, with happier staff and patients and some terrific returns on their investment.

A Model of Efficiency

HFHI quickly became one of those practices that embraces technology by implementing a leading solution, strongly encouraging full use of all features by all providers and staff, and critically evaluating their practice and processes to let the system help them become as productive as possible.

As a result, they found themselves far more structured in areas such as:

- **Documentation**—full clinical documentation and ordering through NextGen EHR software allowed the practice to eliminate transcription services, automatically capture E&M coding, eliminate the superbill through direct billing, create multiple documents (such as patient plans, referral letters, progress notes, etc.) from the discrete data, and be fully prepared for audits.
- **Chart access**—with electronic charts and NextGen ICS (NextGen's scanning solution), the schedulers, providers, in-facility labs, and billing department were suddenly able to access needed information easily and immediately—no more searching for the paper chart or waiting days for a request to be completed. This saved them countless hours and human resources and improved A/R.
- **Scheduling**—with their new scheduling capabilities within NextGen EPM software, staff could more appropriately schedule patients based on an individual's condition and type of visit, etc., reducing cancellations and conflicts and creating workflow efficiencies and convenience for the providers.
- **Tasks**—With NextGen EPM software's WorkLog Manager, HFHI set up tasks to be automatically generated and delegated to various staff, ensuring that responsibilities were clearly assigned, tracked, monitored, completed, never lost or forgotten, and performed by the preferred staff member.
- **Reporting**—HFHI found the speed, detail, and flexibility of NextGen EHR and NextGen EPM software's reporting to be extremely useful in seeing where the practice was operating efficiently, such as tasks completed, number of patient phone calls, type of charges, and procedures.
- **Connectivity**—interfaces with labs enabled faster results and direct importation to the patient's chart; connectivity to pharmacies allowed prescriptions to be automatically faxed, reducing calls; and device interfacing provided direct importation of clinical data, such as vitals and EKGs, saving data entry time and error.
- **Payment posting**—through the use of electronic remittance advice messages and related Reason Code files, HFHI could more efficiently assign rejected claims for appeal and follow-up. Instead of working from the paper EOB, they were able to assign rejected claims to an account rep by the type of rejection.
- **Remote access**—Because providers can access the NextGen EHR system from locations outside the practice, they save valuable travel time by not having to return to the office from the hospital, for example. In addition, they can work from home at convenient hours to complete unfinished tasks, answer e-mails, refill prescriptions, and access patient charts in emergencies without running to the office.

Quantifying the Results

With so many improvements in so many areas, HFHI was able to document the improvements in revenue, the savings in time, and the decrease in associated costs that were attributable to their new systems and the positive changes in their practice. Among the tangible benefits:

- **Lower costs through fewer staff needed**—Fewer staff is now needed in every department at HFHI, due to the elimination of transcription; fewer phone calls with patients, labs, payers, and pharmacies; far less manual coding because of automated E&M coding; fewer claims and payments to appeal; faster reporting; the elimination of paper and chart filing and retrieving; reduction of data entry; and faster scheduling. Bottom line: Reduced records, transcription, and business staff by 32 FTEs, saving \$692,000 annually.

- **Increased revenue from more space**—With space savings due to fewer staff and far less paper chart and office supply storage, more space is available for revenue-generating exam rooms, additional providers, diagnostic or testing facilities, or labs. Bottom line: 1,000 sq. ft. newly available for additional revenue.
- **Savings from office supplies**—Electronic charts and department office supplies have led to savings on paper and storage that come to \$60,000 annually.
- **Outsourcing**—Because NextGen EPM software's WorkLog Manager allows precise types of tasks to be distributed for access by remote workers and then monitored, the practice now outsources much of its record preparation and claims work, saving salaries, taxes, overhead, and valuable space.

Clearly, HFHI has achieved its goals of efficiency and organization and is now reaping the benefits of using healthcare information technology to improve their practice and boost their bottom line.

But HFHI's bottom line isn't the only beneficiary of improved health. The results aren't quantifiable, but the practice is seeing happier staff and even happier patients, because faster, more thorough, more accurate, and more efficient care translates to better care and, ultimately, better health.

"The quality and the accuracy of the work are so much better now."

David Wertheimer, MD
President and CEO of HFHI



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