

# Case Study >>>>

## Horizon Eye Care Ensures Positive Growth and Ongoing Flexibility with EHR/EPM System

Working with a 17-year-old UNIX operating system that lacked continual updates and support was taking its toll on Horizon Eye Care (HEC). As its practice and staff size grew, HEC had concerns about complying with the latest documentation and care standards. The practice knew it needed a secure, reliable electronic health record (EHR) solution and a better enterprise practice management (EPM) system—one designed to help ensure compliance and deliver up-to-date technology.

Suzanne Bruno, HEC Administrator, evaluated several potential solutions. But, most of the offerings under consideration didn't deliver a strong integrated EPM and EHR solution, and they didn't feature the flexibility and customizability HEC needed. Bruno explains, "NextGen Healthcare stood out from its competitors as an industry leader. We have a cornea specialist with very particular imaging needs—and NextGen Healthcare's product could accommodate his specific requests. In addition, retina care at our practice requires the creation of quite a large volume of images. NextGen EHR software provides that capacity—and the drawings created are highly customizable."

Bruno concludes, "It was important to us to pick a solution provider with longevity and proven stability. Being forced to switch providers is a huge drain on staff and resources. The fact that NextGen Healthcare is publicly held—and has a track record of financial success—was a big selling point for us."

### Overview

#### PRACTICE

Horizon Eye Care  
Southern New Jersey  
[www.horizoneyecare.com](http://www.horizoneyecare.com)

#### PRACTICE PROFILE

Horizon Eye Care is a full-service ophthalmology practice featuring surgery and intensive care for glaucoma and retina patients. The practice has six locations in New Jersey, with 10 physicians. Horizon Eye Care sees roughly 150 to 200 patients a day.

#### BUSINESS PROBLEM

As its number of offices grew, and staff size expanded, Horizon Eye Care needed a secure, reliable EHR solution and a more flexible, efficient EPM system to replace its existing outdated technology.

#### SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EPM software in January 2001 and NextGen® EHR software in January 2003. Also utilizes an ePrescribing interface and equipment interfaces (including visual field machines, OCT machine, and lens analyzers).

#### PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

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

#### BENEFITS

- Achieved compliance via better documentation
- Customizable ophthalmology templates
- Improved quality of care
- Increased user satisfaction
- Easy, automated document generation/reporting
- A/R days reduced and expenses cut
- Improved processes by eliminating paper

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## Benefits

Since implementing its integrated NextGen solution in Spring 2004, HEC enhanced patient care, cut costs, and automated key processes. Specifically, the practice achieved the following critical benefits:

### *Gained customizable templates*

With NextGen software, HEC can create individualized templates to match the workflow pattern for each of its doctors. "Some of our doctors like to test refraction before examining pressure, some prefer the reverse. With NextGen software, we can tailor workflow to match individual needs," says Bruno.

Dr. Howard Gross, Medical Director and the owner of HEC, comments, "The NextGen system's homepage provides a helpful 'at a glance' view of a patient's chart—while the customized templates follow a documentation process guided by the steps I take during patient care—these features help to expedite and improve patient encounters."

The NextGen solution features built-in ophthalmic-specific content, which addresses:

- Common problems and diagnoses
- Chief complaints
- History of present illness
- Review of systems
- Eye exams
- Social history/family history
- Allergies/medications
- Symptoms and treatment plans

### *Achieved compliance through improved documentation*

Today, HEC can fully document the level of care provided, as well as billing and insurance information, thereby achieving compliance.

With NextGen software, HEC makes fewer mistakes on the front end because filters clean its claims. "Our old system produced claims that were correct up to 87 percent of the time. Our NextGen solution produces claims that are 97 percent clean," says Bruno.

Before the NextGen solution, HEC had ten doctors writing notes about patient care in ten different ways. "We worried that if Medicare audited our practice, we would face compliance-related issues," explains Bruno. "In an audit, a random sample of patients is chosen for review. If documentation errors are found, a practice may be held liable to deliver refunds. We exhausted the options in trying to make paper charts consistent, but our busy physicians were unable to keep up with the documentation parameters put into place. By implementing NextGen EHR software, our fears were eliminated and the problem was solved."

As it turns out, HEC was audited by Medicare roughly two years ago (post-NextGen). Bruno explains, "For that audit, we had neat, legible patient charts at our fingertips. With the press of a button, we saved a couple hundred hours of labor. Without an EHR, we would have been forced to pull every paper chart, have each doctor dictate the chart contents, and deliver a photocopy of all patient charts to Medicare."

And, as is typical when a practice is audited once, another audit quickly followed. "One year later, we easily sailed through an additional audit without any complications," says Bruno.

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Dr. Gross concludes, "The primary benefit NextGen software delivers is more accurate and complete documentation. We have eliminated lost or incomplete records. Another key benefit is NextGen software's strong interfacing with diagnostic equipment. This allows me to see comparative information quickly through split screen features."

## *Improved quality of care*

Since implementing NextGen software, HEC continually improves the quality of care provided to patients. "Today, if a patient visits multiple offices within our practice—particularly a patient who is coming to us for chronic care—there is no lag time in updating charts or need to fax updates between offices. This eliminates the potential for mistakes in patient care," comments Bruno.

Dr. Gross adds, "Having more complete records reduces the opportunity for errors due to inaccurate charting. Plus, NextGen software enables our multiple locations to manage patient charts in real-time, from on- or off-site. None of this was possible with paper charts."

## *User satisfaction/ease of use*

Starting on an EHR for the first time can create huge shifts in a doctor's work patterns. "Some of our doctors were overly positive when estimating their level of computer expertise, so during our implementation, we spent some time ramping up on basic skills. However, we didn't lose any employees as a result of that process because training on the NextGen application was so logical. Our implementation was a success," says Bruno.

What's more, because physicians can access charts online from any location, they no longer need to come into the office as often at night or over the weekend, which makes for much happier clinicians.



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### *Automated billing and reporting*

With NextGen software, claims are automatically submitted throughout the day. "We back up our system and run reports at night. When staff members arrive in the morning, work is mapped out in their NextGen WorkLog queues. Our NextGen solution delivers tons of capacity, and it is always helping us save time through automation. In addition, NextGen software ensures fewer claim rejections and errors," says Bruno.

Because NextGen Healthcare automated the workflow rules for PQRI (Physician Quality Reporting Initiative), HEC easily implemented several PQRI indicators. "We were part of a pilot program running from July 2007 through December 2007. We recently received our PQRI bonus payment. In this era of continual cutbacks, it was great to have the opportunity to earn some additional revenue. Our NextGen solution made that possible," says Bruno.

### *Realized cost savings*

HEC gained cost savings via its NextGen solution in several key ways. First, it reduced its number of full time employees (FTEs) by one and a half since going paperless. "In addition, even though we have grown from seven physicians to ten in the last five years, we still have less billing staff than if we'd stayed with our old solution," comments Bruno. In addition, HEC completely eliminated transcription costs, totaling about \$10,000 a year. Bruno also confirms that NextGen EPM software has not made a dent in cash flow, but rather helped the practice reduce accounts/receivable (A/R) days from 31 to 26 days.

HEC feels confident in the value of its NextGen solution purchase both today and moving forward. Dr. Gross concludes, "Not only is NextGen software easy to use— it is easy to teach new staff how to use it. NextGen software is infinitely customizable to each physician's needs."

NextGen Healthcare Information System, Inc.

795 Horsham Road, Horsham, PA 19044

p: 215.657.7010 | f: 215.657.7011

sales@nextgen.com | nextgen.com

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