

Case Study >>>

How Katzen Eye Group Achieved Exceptional Results with EPM/EHR Technology

In 2000, as patient volumes grew at the Katzen Eye Group, its seven optometrists and four ophthalmologists were averaging five to eight missing charts per day. Dr. Richard Edlow, Chief Operating Officer of Katzen Eye Group, explains, "With rapidly growing volumes of paper, we were suffering from a classic case of 'has anyone seen Mrs. Smith's chart?' syndrome. This was not only adversely affecting patient care, but creating significant frustration among doctors and staff."

At the time, Katzen also wished to improve A/R days. Its accounts receivable department's collection turn-around time was in line with the average for large group practices—52-54 days out. But, that was much longer than Katzen desired—and handling a denied claim took several days to resolve.

"We knew we needed to make a change to provide better and more efficient care while improving overall operations. We decided to explore new enterprise practice management (EPM) systems. We limited the search to vendors also providing successful electronic health records (EHR) solutions," says Edlow.

Overview

PRACTICE

Katzen Eye Group
Lutherville and Baltimore, MD
www.katzeneye.com

PRACTICE PROFILE

At each of its two Maryland-based offices, Katzen Eye Group provides high-quality eye care—including laser vision corrections; cataract, glaucoma, and keratoconus treatments; cataract and refractive surgery; cosmetic services, and general optical services.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Aggressive growth made keeping track of increasing amounts of paper-based charts difficult. In addition, Katzen sought to improve A/R days through faster, more efficient processes.

SOLUTION

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

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

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

BENEFITS

- Increased patient volumes—and revenue
- Improved processes by eliminating paper
- A/R days reduced
- Supply expenses cut
- Customizable ophthalmology-specific content
- Automated document generation/reporting
- Comprehensive interfacing
- Improved exam/scheduling speed and accuracy

NEXTGEN
HEALTHCARE INFORMATION SYSTEMS



Seeking a comprehensive— and proven—solution

Katzen's search for a new system began by establishing some specific criteria. "We wanted a system that was HIPAA-compliant. This immediately narrowed the search down to about eight vendors. We also wanted a solution with a track record of success in the optometric arena," explains Edlow.

Katzen observed several systems in action to see if patient flow was smooth, to observe how easily staff utilized the system, and to assess the overall functionality of each prospective solution. Edlow comments, "Over the years, we've seen many technology companies fall flat, so we limited our selection process to companies that were well-established and well-funded. In the end, we chose from between two vendors, but one really stood out—and even beat all of our criteria. With NextGen Healthcare—our chosen partner—site visits to two of the company's large practices showed a well-developed package with the flexibility that we needed."

Initially, Katzen planned to run the EPM system for four to six months, and then implement the EHR system. However, at that time, NextGen Healthcare was in the midst of developing new exam templates that Katzen knew would be well worth the wait. Therefore, the practice went live with NextGen EPM software in 2003—and 12 months later started with NextGen EHR software.

Eliminating paper for increased revenue and improved accuracy

Today, Katzen Eye Group's patient volume increases at an annual rate of 15 percent. Even so, patient data is never missing. "Our entire practice has been transformed and is now well positioned for the future. I don't think we could ever go back," explains Edlow.

Katzen Eye Group achieved the following key benefits as a result of its partnership with NextGen Healthcare:

Alleviated staffing challenges

Since implementing the NextGen EPM and NextGen EHR systems, Katzen Eye is growing without requiring additional human resources. Katzen also eliminated its need for file clerks—and reassigned its clerks to diagnostic testing. In addition, the EHR has alleviated some of the challenges associated with finding qualified front desk staff and technicians. "It is notoriously difficult to find experienced staff. Since implementing NextGen EHR software, we can hire people with a great aptitude for our business—but no experience—and they can be easily trained using NextGen EHR software templates. The logical flow and standardized processes help new hires learn our business much faster. In fact, new employees get up to speed in one third of the time it used to take. Plus, we're training technicians in one month when it used to take up to six," says Edlow.

Increased revenue

With its NextGen solution, Katzen Eye is enjoying increased revenue. "For the first three and a half years that we were live with our NextGen solution, we could not hire any new doctors due to space limitations. However, without adding physical space, we still increased patient volume and revenue by 12 percent each year. In addition, our file rooms, which previously held paper charts, are now converted into three exam rooms. Each room can accommodate up to 24 patients a day. With an average revenue per patient of \$150, that's \$3,600 a day—or \$936,000 a year—in additional revenue," explains Edlow.

Thanks to automation and coding, Katzen's billing is executed more accurately and expediently—plus, rare problem claims are resolved faster. "Our NextGen solution enabled a dramatic improvement in our A/R days. We plummeted from 54 to 24 days," confirms Edlow. By eliminating paper and charts, Katzen's office supply expenses dropped \$1,000 a month. Plus, automatic ePrescribing eliminated the need for paper prescriptions—and increased the amount of eyeglass prescriptions being filled in Katzen's own optical department.

Gained ophthalmology-specific content

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

“NextGen EHR software’s quick exam, procedure, and operative templates are incredibly useful—and there’s plenty of room for customization,” explains Edlow.

Achieved comprehensive interfacing

The NextGen system interfaces to ophthalmic diagnostic equipment, refractive pre-screening equipment, and advanced image management systems. “Thanks to the NextGen system’s ability to interface with other software and equipment, we’re able to use TeleVox® for automated appointment confirmation phone calls. Plus, we’re looking forward to interfacing with telecom for caller ID soon,” explains Edlow.

Automated document generation and reporting

With NextGen software, referral letters, chart notes, prescription refill orders, educational materials, and consent forms are generated automatically. “Today, chart notes and referral letters are complete before the patient leaves our exam room. Transcription costs and errors have been completely eliminated. In addition, it is critical to provide our patients’ diabetic reports to their primary care physician—now, these reports are generated and sent automatically during a patient visit,” says Edlow.

Improved exam/scheduling speed and accuracy

Katzen’s surgical scheduling process is dramatically improved and streamlined with NextGen software. And, NextGen EHR software’s quick exam screens and comprehensive procedure and pre-/post-op templates deliver speed and accuracy. They include refractive re-check, IOP checks, post-op visits, and general/disease specific follow-ups. Edlow adds, “Because we can review patient records from anywhere, patient care is definitely improved.”

A solid partnership built on trust

The Katzen Eye Group and NextGen Healthcare partnership is still going strong after working together for many years. “With a rapidly growing company like NextGen Healthcare, we were initially concerned about whether we’d receive adequate support. But, we’ve never been disappointed. In fact, we believe in NextGen Healthcare’s solution so strongly, we’ve been willing to host numerous site visits for prospective customers,” concludes Edlow.



