

Case Study >>>

Flexibility is Key for Group Practices and MSOs

When the Medical Clinic of North Texas (MCNT) wanted to go paperless and began looking for an EHR in 1999, they realized one thing very quickly. They needed a flexible system. They needed its flexibility in their clinical documentation, in its compatibility with practice management systems, and in its reporting capabilities.

Already, the primary care clinic had 16 offices in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and consisted of 52 physicians specializing in internal medicine, family practice, obstetrics/gynecology and pediatrics.

Each specialty needed to document in different ways, following their own protocols, their discipline's typical workflow, and their standard content, procedures, orders, etc.

And as they already were using a practice management system they felt at the time was sufficient, they needed a clinical system that was proven to interface seamlessly and allow robust, productive use from the combination of the systems.

As well, MCNT realized the value they would receive when discrete and extensive clinical data were extracted and reported, and they knew they would need flexible searching, filtering, formatting, and exporting to generate the reports they planned to use in a host of ways. They knew a challenge was ahead.

Overview

PRACTICE

Medical Clinic of North Texas
Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX area
www.mcnt.com

PRACTICE PROFILE

Seventy-eight physicians across 25 locations providing a full range of primary care, pediatric, and OB-GYN services.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Needed the flexibility in an EHR to document patient encounters effectively for different specialties.

SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EHR software in 1999, enabling full clinical documentation and robust reporting. Subsequently implemented NextGen® EPM for an integrated solution.

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Knowledge Base Model for Family Practice
- Template builder
- Pay-for-Performance reporting
- NextMD® patient portal

BENEFITS

- Comprehensive documentation
- Thorough reporting capabilities
- Powerful patient communications
- Improved cash flow



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Confronting the Challenge

MCNT presented this difficult challenge to Impel Management Services, a management services organization (MSO) they had formed in 1995. Impel provides information systems, accounts receivable management, accounting, and other administrative functions to MCNT and serves as an application service provider in supplying information services and practice management capabilities to seven additional practices.

In addition to the flexibility they sought for MCNT in an EHR, “we were looking for a stable company that we felt would be around as long as we will,” says Mike Yerrid, Impel’s chief information officer.

After an extensive search, Impel and MCNT found the EHR that met their needs in NextGen EHR software from NextGen Healthcare Information Systems, Inc. They installed the system that year.

Flexibility Found

Impel found that NextGen EHR software easily exchanged data with MCNT’s existing practice management system, and the NextGen solution had so much of the flexibility that MCNT wanted. “I can’t use the excuse that the system doesn’t do something. Ours may not be doing it today, but I have the tools to make it do it,” Yerrid says. For example, he only needed three hours to create an input template that a physician wanted for capturing patients’ home blood pressure readings. “With NextGen EHR software, I was able to create a solution within a day that lets us capture quantitative data, instead of just scanning images or waiting for a vendor to develop the capability for us,” he says.

That flexibility also applies in terms of being able to customize NextGen EHR templates. “If you want to buy a rigid product that tells you how to practice medicine, buy something else,” Yerrid says. “But if you want to tell your EHR how you want to practice medicine, NextGen EHR software is ideal.” NextGen Healthcare is one of the few EHR vendors with extremely flexible templates, as well as a template builder that uses SQL server technology, with an open database architecture that allows non-programmers to build key datasets and tables and develop any type of template they would like. And NextGen’s Knowledge Base Model for Primary Care is a highly comprehensive set of templates, documents, and configuration settings created with the help of providers at MCNT and other leading family physicians nationwide.

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Mike Yerrid, CIO
Impel



The workflow within these templates mimics standard primary care workflows and incorporates additional features, such as decision support, reference checking, and diagnosis proposals, that primary care providers often use.

Impel even developed their own disease management templates before they were available from NextGen Healthcare, and they were a rousing success.

Overall, the templates evolved so thoroughly they allowed MCNT's providers to completely chart their encounters through NextGen EHR software. No more dictating, no more transcribing. In fact, Yerrid oversaw a complete elimination of transcription expenses with the NextGen EHR system. "Initially, we estimated a reduction of 50%. That alone would have paid for half of the NextGen EHR software within three years," he says. "But we had a 100% reduction."

MCNT was spending \$180,000 annually for transcriptions prior to purchasing the NextGen EHR system. Now they spend nothing, and have added 26 physicians since then.

Using the Data

Information gathered on PCs in each exam room flows into a single data source at Impel's central business office. To keep data traffic at a minimum and decrease phone expenses, Impel uses terminal server thin client technology with frame relay communications.

From this gathered clinical information, Impel uses NextGen EHR software's extremely flexible and robust reporting features to format and evaluate critical data, and managed care plans and insurers have noticed. "They realize they're going to be able to get HEDIS data and do their audits more easily," Yerrid says. "And this gives us excellent leverage when it comes to contracting and pay-for-performance incentives, because we have the records to prove things. We feel we practice extremely good medicine, but that's been very difficult to prove."

Yerrid also uses the reporting for other important functions. With pay-for-performance standards coming out from the ACP and the ACFP, NextGen EHR software will help identify performances in those areas and easily allow template elements to be added that will allow those points to be easily captured and documented. Many times performance standards are met but are not always documented, and therefore not recognized. Now, they always will be. Another major reporting benefit Yerrid touts is the tremendous resource savings and patient safety advantages associated with medication recalls. At least four times in the past several years, drug recalls led MCNT to the reporting feature to immediately determine patient users and generate letters to all those affected. What now takes 30 minutes used to take several people many days, with resources devoted to attempting to recall who was on the medication, check their charts, pull their contact information, send letters or call them, take return calls, answer questions, generate new prescriptions, and much more.



Patient safety and outcomes are also improved with MCNT's extensive use of NextGen EHR software's health maintenance features. With the ability to place health monitor dates and triggers on any template, including the telephone communication template, users can see at a glance whether a patient is overdue for a certain test, immunization, or exam based on protocols and get them in for treatment.

Letting NextGen Handle Everything

After launching the NextGen EHR system at one family practice, MCNT quickly added more sites and now has 78 physicians and 35 nurse practitioners and physician assistants using NextGen EHR software at 25 separate locations.

Consequently, Yerrid wanted the advantages of one vendor for both his EHR and his practice management system. He implemented NextGen's enterprise management system (NextGen EPM) and is seeing strong returns in both time saved and better cash flow.

Claims rejection rates are vastly improved, Yerrid says, as NextGen EPM software has much more control in preventing errors of data entry, because charges come directly from the E&M coding in NextGen EHR software. He also finds the mapping to policy and group numbers very helpful.

And whereas any claims denials or delays used to take weeks to resend—having to send the request to the appropriate practice location, have them research it, send to back to the central billing office (CBO), then resending out—now, the CBO has access to patient charts right at their location and can resend the claims in mere minutes.

As for other NextGen products, Yerrid has plans to transition to NextGen ICS, the image scanning solution, and NextGen's NextMD, a secure patient-provider internet portal.

The same transition is in the works for the NextMD portal. MCNT had 5,000 patients signed up in an earlier solution by another vendor, prior to the development of NextGen's portal. However, that vendor shut its doors while NextGen's solution grew dramatically, developing an integrated, robust portal along the way. MCNT had even begun getting reimbursed for the e-visits performed through the initial portal, and plans to do the same with the NextMD portal. They also were using the previous portal for appointment requests, prescription refills, billing questions, and HPI, all of which are available on the NextMD solution and which will be reintroduced.

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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.

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