

Case Study

Oakview Dermatology Eliminates Paper for Improved Operations and Care

Something was conspicuously missing from CEO Dr. Dawn Sammons' new dermatology practice in Athens, Ohio. When Oakview Dermatology opened in the fall of 2008, there wasn't a paper record in sight because the practice was already up and running with NextGen Healthcare's electronic health record (EHR) software. Sammons greeted her new patients not with an antiquated paper chart, but with a leading-edge EHR solution.

NextGen software's innovative features, ease of use, and commitment to ongoing service and support ultimately sold Sammons and her team on the system. Since deploying the EHR in concert with NextGen Enterprise Practice Management (EPM) system, Oakview Dermatology continues to collaborate with its new partner to pioneer the dermatology-specific NextGen knowledge base module (KBM) with great results.



Overview

PRACTICE

Oakview Dermatology
Athens, OH
www.oakviewderm.com

PRACTICE PROFILE

Specialty practice that offers a wide range of advanced techniques in medical, cosmetic, and surgical dermatology.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

To improve care and streamline operations, Oakview's founder wanted a completely paperless practice utilizing a cutting-edge, integrated electronic health record and practice management system.

SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EHR and EPM, utilizing NextGen dermatology-specific content, which enables providers to quickly document and store patient data with more than 60 pre-built HPI and procedure templates.

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Integrated EHR and practice management system
- Robust functionality, specialty-specific content
- Easy to use, intuitive functionality
- Electronic prescribing
- Superior service and ongoing support

BENEFITS

- Achieved 100% paper chart-free environment
- Reduced FTEs and dictation for lower costs
- Improved coding accuracy for increased revenue
- Optimized productivity, efficiency
- Enhanced clinical documentation, workflow
- Improved care management
- Streamlined PQRI reporting

NEXTGEN
HEALTHCARE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Reducing redundancy and inefficiency for enhanced satisfaction

When opening her private practice, Dawn Sammons had an abundance of experience to build upon, including a residency at O’Bleness Memorial Hospital in Athens, Ohio. One thing she wouldn’t take from her past, however, was a dependence on paper. “There is a lot of redundancy and inefficiency with paper records,” comments Dr. Sammons.

From past situations, she understood that the transition from paper charts to an EHR system wasn’t always simple. When starting up Oakview Dermatology, she knew one thing for certain—her new practice would never see a paper medical record. “I determined that we would be entirely electronic from day one,” she recalls.

Innovative technology tools and top-notch service

Dr. Sammons spent hours researching innovations that would make hers a leading-edge facility, with an EHR system topping the list. With help from husband, Steve, her practice administrator-to-be, she narrowed the number of potential EHR solutions to three: a low-end EHR, a mid-range system, and what she considered to be the top-of-the-line solution—NextGen EHR.

Already leaning towards a NextGen system based on its robust capabilities and her initial impressions about the company’s commitment to quality customer service and support, Dr. Sammons visited a practice where she could see the EHR in action and learn more about how it could benefit her office. The site visit, along with input from other incoming staff, sealed the deal.

Following a six-week implementation, Oakview Dermatology went live on the NextGen system in September 2008, the very first day the practice was open. To keep things as stress-free as possible for staff and patients, Oakview started slowly, scheduling only two patients per provider per hour. Users quickly became comfortable with the system and Oakview increased its patient load with regularity, every week adding one extra patient each hour until it reached maximum capacity of about eight patients per provider per hour.

“Since we became comfortable with the system, we’re at least as quick as before, with the added benefit of being able to capture so much more information than we could in a paper chart. My staff now says they can’t imagine going back to a paper-based system.”

Dawn Sammons, DO
Oakview Dermatology



Improving patient care with intuitive dermatology content

It wasn't long before Oakview was ready to take its EHR strategy to the next level with NextGen Healthcare's new dermatology KBM. This specialty-specific application provides exclusive dermatology content developed with input from hundreds of leading dermatologists, as well as Mohs micrographic surgery resources. Users can quickly document and store patient data with more than 60 pre-built "history of present illness" (HPI) and procedure templates.

The application also features more than 350 exam descriptions, medication lists, reconstructive repair options, and customizable images. Other features of the software include:

- Skin cancer history monitoring
- Notification of "untreated" and "pending" entries
- Electronic prescribing and interaction checking using an integrated drug database
- Online lab order entry and automatic results reporting
- Enhanced documentation and workflow via exam pop-ups

Oakview staff quickly adapted to NextGen EHR and the dermatology KBM. "We found it very easy to navigate," according to Dr. Sammons. "If someone has basic computer skills, it's very easy to pick up because it's so intuitive."

In addition to the electronic prescribing module, the practice takes advantage of the system's PQRI capabilities to track and report melanoma cases. "The dermatology KBM automatically populates PQRI (Physician Quality Resource Initiative) forms with the appropriate data," comments Sammons. "This makes reporting much easier for us."

Staff, partners, and patients weigh in on life without paper charts

One year since going live on the system, Dr. Sammons praises the documentation and workflow benefits of NextGen EHR. "Many physicians will resist an EHR system that affects their workflow." However, she notes that by changing a few minor processes to adapt to the EHR solution, their office has become much more efficient.

"Since we became comfortable with the system, we operate at least as quickly as before, with the added benefit of being able to capture so much more information than we could in a paper chart," she explains. "My staff now says they can't imagine going back to a paper-based system."

Feedback from referring physicians has also been impressive. Since all reports and documents are generated within a patient's EHR at the time of visit, including consultation and referral letters, it's not uncommon for a referring physician to receive documentation prior to the patient leaving the dermatology office. And as a bonus, Oakview almost entirely eliminated dictation costs, Dr. Sammons reports.

The majority of patients who noticed their records are electronic express their enthusiasm as well, according to Dr. Sammons. "Most conclude that practices embracing information technology are also probably up on the most recent trends in medical care."

Patients delight in the fact that when they leave the office, answers are never hard to come by. When an individual calls in with a question, nurses do not have to search for a chart and medical histories are immediately available on any of the office's computers. And Dr. Sammons herself is never out of touch. With her laptop and a wireless Internet connection, she is able to personally respond to patient requests—including medication refills—whenever or wherever she may be.

Improving the bottom line

Perhaps the greatest benefit of Oakview's investment in the NextGen EHR and companion EPM system can be seen in the revenue cycle. Not only has the technology saved the efforts of one full-time employee because data is automatically and seamlessly forwarded from the EHR to the EPM, but it also has greatly increased the practice's coding accuracy. "Our revenue is about 15% greater than expected when we established the practice, based on the fact that we are correctly coding," according to Dr. Sammons.

NextGen Healthcare's award-winning service and support has undoubtedly saved Oakview Dermatology time and money as staff became more efficient and comfortable with the technology. "The service that NextGen Healthcare offers is ultimately what sold us on the system," she says. "It has certainly lived up to our expectations."

Looking forward to a bright future

Oakview continues to expand its EHR capabilities and features at a reasonable pace, including a roll out of NextGen Healthcare's patient/provider portal (NextMD®) for patients requesting online access to lab or biopsy test results. "These features will only help make things more efficient for us," Dr. Sammons confirms.

When asked what advice she would offer similar practices considering an EHR implementation, Dr. Sammons emphatically says not to skimp. "Too many people are intimidated by outlay of capital upfront and therefore buy a less expensive system. They will pay the price later when their satisfaction goes down because their partner isn't keeping up with the technology or if the system isn't flexible enough to keep up with the rapidly changing healthcare industry."

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