

# Case Study >>>

## NextGen EHR improves operations and grows with dynamic orthopaedic practice

Staff members at a progressive central Virginia orthopaedic practice were growing weary of the continual hunt for their patients' paper charts at their busy facility. The providers also loathed wasting money on paper, transcription, copying, faxing and, most notably, the inefficient use of staff time—costs that could be avoided with operational and IT improvements.

An electronic health record (EHR), would enhance operations, improve quality of care, and decrease expenses. Its search for the right technology led the practice to NextGen Healthcare Information Systems, a leading EHR and enterprise practice management (EPM) technology provider. It wasn't long after the partnership was formed that the practice began attaining its improvement goals.

### Leading-edge orthopaedic practice gets on board with EHR early

The Orthopaedic Center of Central Virginia (OCCV) in Lynchburg has never shied away from technology. Prior to its founding via the merger of three regional orthopaedic practices, a small group of progressive physicians from Central Virginia Orthopaedics began discussing the potential benefits of EHR technology to healthcare delivery.

## Overview

### PRACTICE

Orthopaedic practice based in central Virginia

### PRACTICE PROFILE

The physicians at Blue Ridge Orthopedics, Central Virginia Orthopaedics, and Piedmont Orthopaedic Surgery saw a way to develop a center for excellence in complete musculoskeletal medical services. In 2005, they combined their practices into The Orthopaedic Center of Central Virginia to offer the community a wealth of experience and expertise within one practice. In addition to general orthopaedics and sports medicine, the practice offers specialists in rheumatology, physiatry, in addition to both an Osteoporosis Center and a Spine Center.

### BUSINESS PROBLEM

Forward-thinking orthopaedists recognized that electronic health records were the wave of the future. They desired a system to streamline operations, improve care delivery, and enable quality reporting and participation in quality initiatives.

### SOLUTION

The practice implemented the NextGen® EHR and EPM system to improve both administrative and clinical workflow.

### PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Customizable templates and menus
- Specialty-specific content and Knowledge Based Model (KBM)
- Onsite and remote access to complete patient record
- Integration with best-of-class practice management system
- Electronic prescribing
- Advanced reporting and analysis

### BENEFITS

- Flexibility and adaptability to individual provider clinical style
- Easy to learn, easy to use
- Ability to make changes and conduct training with in-house staff
- Data exchange with other practices, ancillary services, hospital
- Access to unprecedented business intelligence
- Cost savings

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Talk quickly moved to action, and Central Virginia Orthopaedics was soon searching for EHR software that would replace its paper charting system. The year was 1998, before EHRs had really taken root in healthcare, particularly within small specialty practices.

“We have some very technically savvy physicians at our practice who identified EHRs as the wave of the future and really wanted to get a head start,” recalls Barbie Hayes, MBA, now director of operations at OCCV.

### Identifying Technology to Carry OCCV Forward

Among the many improvements Central Virginia Orthopaedics hoped to gain from an EHR, improved care delivery was at the top of the list. Additional benefits included:

- Ease of documentation
- Immediate access to comprehensive patient information
- Clinical decision support
- Enhanced reporting for participation in quality initiatives
- Operational efficiency
- Cost savings

After about one year spent evaluating systems against stringent criteria, the practice selected NextGen EHR.

The practice also standardized on NextGen EPM to ensure a seamless flow of patient clinical and demographic data throughout the organization, as well as among its similarly automated partners such as the local hospital, payers, and other ancillary healthcare organizations.

“We were really looking for a good scheduling system and NextGen Healthcare provided the best application that we had come across,” Hayes says. “It was a great improvement over what we had been using and proved to be what sold me on the system,” comments Hayes.

### Rollout begins, then practice expands

The practice first began implementation of NextGen Healthcare’s practice management system to expedite the eventual loading of patient information into the medical record. Fortunately, they were able to easily roll demographics from their old system into NextGen software and by October 2000 went live on the EPM. A three-phased approach to implementing the EHR soon followed.

The first stage was to make templates to replace paper used in the practice such as encounter forms, work notes, physical therapy orders, and MRI requests. In addition, practice staff scanned medical histories. Going forward, patients would submit a written medical history form that medical assistants then key into the EHR software.

Stage 2 involved upgrading prescription management functions. The electronic prescribing functionality within NextGen EHR enables providers automatically to identify patient-specific drug allergies or recorded side effects before generating the prescription. The ‘scripts generated from the EHR software are clear and legible, reducing errors and diminishing the calls from pharmacists to clarify orders. During this phase, the practice likewise created standard referral requests and implemented NextGen Image Control System (ICS)—high-volume document imaging, scanning and management software—in order to accept outside records and reports (e.g., MRI results) and append them to the appropriate patient record.

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“We have some very technically savvy physicians at our practice who identified EHRs as the wave of the future...our physicians were excited to incorporate it into the practice and reap its benefits.”

Barbie Hayes, MBA  
*Director of Operations*

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The organization then moved on to Stage 3 during which it implemented NextGen RTF Transcription Note Monitor and File Monitor, which allows the practice to import dictated and transcribed notes, automatically associating files with a specific patient, encounter, and category. In addition, it enables providers to digitize results and readings like range of motion studies for inclusion in the record.

Also during Stage 3, the practice leveraged NextGen functionality to establish connectivity with partner labs. NextGen Healthcare and OCCV collaborated to develop a unidirectional interface between the hospital and NextGen EHR, equipping the facility to accept electronic requests for the first time.

At the same time, OCCV began developing functionality to receive external consultation reports and patient histories as well as operative reports and discharge summaries. The practice also launched NextGen workflow management, which generates tasks for providers alerting them to matters that need their attention, such as reviewing a patient's x-ray.

At the onset, the NextGen project manager conducted training with a core group of individuals who subsequently supported internal staff. "The 'train the trainer' approach was so successful, users were up and running in no time," Hayes recalls. "The software is so intuitive and user-friendly, training was a snap."

Well into its EHR strategy in 2005, Central Virginia Orthopaedics shook things up when it merged with two other Lynchburg-area orthopaedic service providers—Blue Ridge Orthopedics and Piedmont Orthopaedic Surgery—to form OCCV. However, its two new-found partners were still using paper charts. They immediately converted to the OCCV NextGen EPM system and, the following summer, began integrating them into the EHR.

## Making life easier with an orthopaedic knowledge base model

As an early adopter of EHR technology, OCCV capitalized on NextGen flexibility that enables the practice to tailor templates for orthopaedic-specific applications. "The NextGen system is very customizable," Hayes says. "If that meant creating a template based on our workflow, that's exactly what we did."

As the technology evolved, so did NextGen functionality dedicated to medical specialties. To further help its customers manage the nuances in their particular fields, NextGen offers knowledge base models (KBM). Currently, OCCV has set a goal of having 90% of all examinations conducted by OCCV clinicians documented with point-and-click functionality enabled by NextGen KBM.

As with any healthcare encounter, however, there are many unique and unusual situations that must be recorded in the record. "We're paperless, but not 'documentation-less,'" notes Ryan Kling, ATC, PA-C, (Physician Assistant) with OCCV. "There are always unusual things that come up during a visit. The best EHR doesn't cover 100% of all possibilities. When we need to, we are able to use free-text documentation to ensure our records are complete."



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## NextGen EPM and EHR produce results for office staff, providers

In addition to its intuitive and user-friendly scheduling capabilities, Hayes is particularly impressed with NextGen billing functionality. "NextGen EPM is a very good system with a great billing component," she says. "It has allowed us to keep close track of our collections. As a result, our A/R has performed beyond expectations."

To ease the transition from paper to computer, OCCV incorporated the same methodology and workflow its providers were accustomed to, a testament to NextGen flexibility. "It allowed clinicians to design the system any way they wanted and manipulate it to fit their particular workflow," Hayes says. In addition, to make sure providers get the most of the system, OCCV has incorporated voice recognition software into the system to enable caregivers to dictate notes directly into the orthopaedic template.

Yet the system is so powerful and full featured, providers not only are able to document entire episodes of care electronically, they also have access to this information from virtually anywhere—in the hospital's OR and ED, on-call, or at home after hours.

OCCV has put NextGen software to work to deliver vital business intelligence to providers' and administrators' desktops. During the earlier Vioxx recall, for instance, providers generated a list of all patients effected and contacted them immediately. They are also able to capture patient's warfarin INR levels, tracking those whose results

are greater than 2.0, which may affect treatment decisions. Likewise, it can extract ZIP code information from the integrated EHR/EPM data base to hone marketing and patient outreach strategies.

Looking ahead, OCCV leadership is planning Stage 4 and striving to develop a regional healthcare information organization (RHIO) in Lynchburg. "We would like to work more closely with the local hospital system," Kling says. "We are collaborating with NextGen Healthcare to see how we can implement its Community Health Solution (CHS) in our area."

When counseling colleagues on the best approach to take when implementing EHR, Hayes and Kling offer three pieces of advice:

1. Roll out the system in phases. "You need to plan ahead and make sure the system works for you," Kling says.
2. Take advantage of the opportunity to evaluate your workflow as you undertake implementation. "You need to track who sees what and when, and who needs to 'touch' each task," he adds. "You need to examine what you do and see how you can use technology to make it better."
3. Dedicate someone to serve as administrator and database manager. "There are so many things these systems can do that someone needs (to) spend the time to see how they can help your practice and implement them in the practice," says Hayes. "It's a job in itself. If you really want to get your money's worth, you should have someone committed to it."

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