

# Case Study >>>

## Pediatric Alliance Improves Patient Care with Industry-leading EPM and EHR

With 14 offices across Southwestern, PA, Pediatric Alliance focuses on delivering high quality care to infants, children, and adolescents. However, when its paper-based charts grew in volume and care became hindered by inefficient processes, the Chief Executive Officer of the organization—Elizabeth Wertz Evans—took action. She explains, “We had too much paper to manage, track, and file, which led to disorganization. The inefficiencies in our processes were magnified as we tried to manage data for patients being treated in multiple offices. In addition, we could not collect true clinical data about our practice without labor-intensive manual reviews of paper records.”

Joseph Aracri, DO, with Pediatric Alliance adds, “Our paper system had become cumbersome and time consuming. Plus, it was extremely difficult to maintain adequate staff to keep up with our administrative demands.”

To solve these challenges, Evans proposed an electronic health record (EHR) solution. She assembled a team—consisting of physicians, office managers, nurses, medical assistants, IT staff, and other administrative personnel—to investigate specific vendors. “We selected our top three prospective partners, each of which conducted on-site demonstrations. We also investigated the solvency of the companies under consideration and visited clinical sites currently using each EHR product. Finally, we narrowed down the competition to just two solutions.”



### Overview

#### PRACTICE

Pediatric Alliance, P.C.  
Southwestern, PA  
[www.pediatricalliance.com](http://www.pediatricalliance.com)

#### PRACTICE PROFILE

Pediatric Alliance consists of 10 divisions and 14 offices, each devoted to providing high-quality, comprehensive primary care to infants, children, and adolescents through clinical expertise, advocacy, education, collaboration, research, and information management. In addition to primary care pediatricians, the practice has several pediatric subspecialists.

#### BUSINESS PROBLEM

High volumes of paper-based charts made documentation and care increasingly difficult, while also preventing the effective collection of true clinical data about the practice.

#### SOLUTION

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

#### PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Efficient chart access
- Pediatric-specific content and modules
- Improved patient communications
- Better clinical documentation and coding

#### BENEFITS

- Improved processes by eliminating paper
- Cost savings via pay-for-performance data
- Improved patient communication and safety
- Reduced overall risk
- Reduced vaccine administrative time by one third

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## Seeking an easy-to-use pediatric-specific solution

Pediatric Alliance chose NextGen for several key reasons. “NextGen Healthcare was the only company that gave us the feeling—and the outright promise—that our relationship with them would be an ongoing partnership. Plus, the company exhibited pediatric expertise that gave us confidence. Finally, NextGen Healthcare demonstrates its commitment to our specialty area by having pediatricians on staff,” explains Evans.

Even before Pediatric Alliance signed a contract, NextGen Healthcare offered suggestions for exciting projects it could help facilitate that would assist the practice in improving patient care and generating additional revenue, such as pay-for-performance initiatives and HIPAA-friendly research projects. Aracri comments, “In evaluating solutions, ease-of-use was critical, as was finding a server-based product as opposed to an internet-based one. We gravitated toward solutions recommended by our insurance provider.”

In just 28 days, Pediatric Alliance implemented the NextGen Enterprise Practice Management (EPM) solution—designed to deliver a superior return-on-investment by streamlining front and back office administration, improving efficiencies, reducing A/R days, and enhancing the quality of patient care.

Since January 2008, two more Pediatric Alliance offices went live on NextGen EHR—and soon, all primary care offices will be live. “We’re especially excited about how fast and easy it will be—with NextGen Healthcare’s help—to make the right contacts to kick start pay-for-performance projects. It’s also thrilling to know that our feedback truly has an impact at NextGen Healthcare, and that the product is always evolving and improving,” comments Evans.

## Improving processes and cutting costs by eliminating paper

With its NextGen solution, Pediatric Alliance gained one centralized location for patient data—and positively transformed its practice.

### *Enhanced processes/eliminated paper*

With NextGen software, Pediatric Alliance can participate in electronic versions of life-saving initiatives with the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). NextGen Healthcare is the only EHR vendor working nationally with the AAP to incorporate the Emergency Information Form (EIF) into its EHR. “The EIF is so critical because it provides an electronic snapshot of a child that a doctor or nurse in the emergency department can use in treatment in the moments before a care giver arrives at the hospital. This is especially critical for children with multiple diagnoses and complex medical situations,” comments Evans. Aracri adds, “I’ve enjoyed better growth chart plotting using NextGen software templates—and better overall patient tracking.”

What’s more, Pediatric Alliance—and its patients—are enjoying the NextGen system’s ePrescribing module, which allows physicians to order, record, and transmit a prescription directly to the pharmacist. This ensures that no information about dosage, frequency, etc., becomes lost in translation or transport.

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**“We were very impressed by the speed of our enterprise-wide implementation, especially because our last practice management system took four months to roll out.”**

Elizabeth Wertz Evans  
Chief Executive Officer

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NextGen software's tasking feature delivers another critical benefit to Pediatric Alliance. "We anticipate that—in the future—NextGen EHR software will enable our doctors to address clinical issues automatically between patient visits. It will also allow our doctors and nurses to communicate electronically so simple requests can be reviewed and approved quickly," comments Evans.

The Quick Visit templates are especially helpful to Pediatric Alliance clinical staff. "This customizable template makes routine visits—such as common cold appointments—so much faster and easier. Plus, as data is being collected by nurses or medical assistants, we can follow along using workload check-up templates," says Aracri.

"By conducting administrative tasks electronically—such as billing for vaccines—we've reduced vaccine administration time by one-third of what it used to be. Moving forward, we anticipate a five percent increase in revenue as a result," reports Aracri.

## **Increased revenue**

With NextGen Healthcare as a partner, Pediatric Alliance is more easily and effectively applying for grant funding with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The practice taps into the expertise and experience of NextGen Healthcare staff—and the power of the NextGen EHR software—to win critical monetary support. "This funding will help us further convert manual paper processes into an electronic format. For example, our emergency form and care plans—summarizing a child's care—are currently paper-based. At present, we're working on an electronic template for the care plan. This will prevent errors and omissions—and allow us to complete the form just once. Down the road, we plan to purchase the NextMD® solution, which will create a portal between our practice and our patients. As a result, families will have immediate access to the forms just mentioned," says Evans.

## **Gained pay-for-performance benefits**

Currently, Pediatric Alliance participates in a pay-for-performance plan with its biggest insurer via a claims-based system. "When we get reports back from our insurer, we sometimes know data is incorrect. In the near future, we plan to do a pilot project using NextGen software to gather true clinical data that demonstrates the high quality of our care based on true clinical information," says Evans.

Through improved coding, Pediatric Alliance anticipates better documentation and cost savings. Aracri comments, "Now, I feel confident that our claims will be accurately and completely captured—and quality of care will greatly improve." Evans adds, "We're looking forward to embarking on more pay-for-performance programs that will help us generate revenue."



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### *Improved patient safety/reduced risk*

Electronic prescribing delivers huge safety, quality, and risk management benefits to Pediatric Alliance clients. With NextGen software, the organization can also track medical orders electronically by interfacing directly with the appropriate facility or lab. In addition, if a parent fails to follow through on a medical order, Pediatric Alliance receives an alert. "From a risk management standpoint, this helps to reduce our risk and improve the quality of care," explains Aracri.

Finally, initiatives made possible by NextGen EHR software—such as those detailed above—will help Pediatric Alliance lobby with its malpractice insurance carrier to potentially lower its premiums.

### **Gaining networking opportunities through a solid partnership**

"With our NextGen solution, we've enjoyed access to networking opportunities and resources that otherwise we may not have encountered—especially during the annual Users' Group Meeting. Plus, because NextGen Healthcare has pediatricians on staff, we've had the type of physician-to-physician dialogue that is critical to us. Finally, we look forward to continuing to develop this partnership as Pediatric Alliance grows and develops new initiatives," concludes Evans.

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