



Spotlight On:

Orthopedics

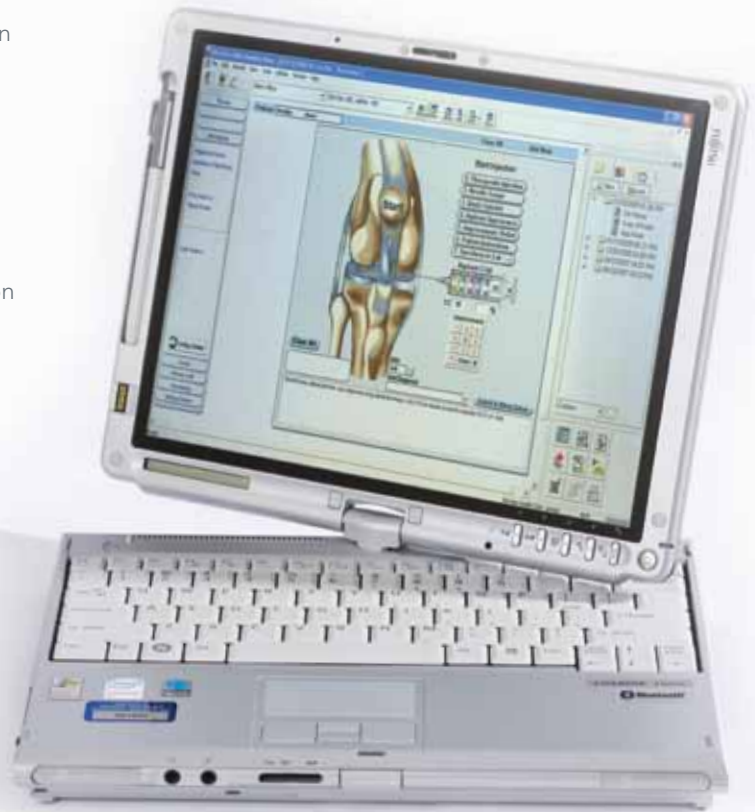
Discrete data: The secret ingredient in quality orthopedic care

Since the dawn of medicine, healthcare providers have continually sought ways to improve treatments. It wasn't so long ago, for example, when early knee replacements were heralded as "the" advance in orthopedic care. Today, however, providers are harnessing the power of electronic health records (EHRs) to effectively analyze treatment outcomes and best practices—across entire patient populations.

Not all EHRs, however, are equally capable of performing the top-level data mining so central to both the business and clinical functions of today's orthopedic practice. While every EHR solution boasts "data capture," it's imperative to know exactly how that process is accomplished.

Products offering anything less than the discrete data capabilities provided by the NextGen® EHR solution are a little like the early total knees: outdated tools rapidly being surpassed by more effective technology. In fact, the collection and dissemination of discrete data is critical for successful participation in quality care, Meaningful Use, and other initiatives now shaping the future of healthcare.

Take a look at why discrete data is important—and how it can help your orthopedic practice thrive.



Why does data format matter?

Discrete data: The term “discrete data” refers to each specific data item you enter in your EHR. It might be a patient’s medication, a negative posterior drawer, a positive Lachman’s...any informational element you choose to include in the record. The NextGen EHR collects all of those “pieces” of your documentation as individual data points.

Unstructured data: By contrast, most EHR software for orthopedic practices collects text and/or image data. You might receive a text document of a treatment plan, for instance, but there is no functionality to extract specific data from that document for report generation or other management functions. You could review a scanned image of your last progress note, but that technology makes no individual data points available automatically for analysis or for Meaningful Use of EHRs as currently defined by

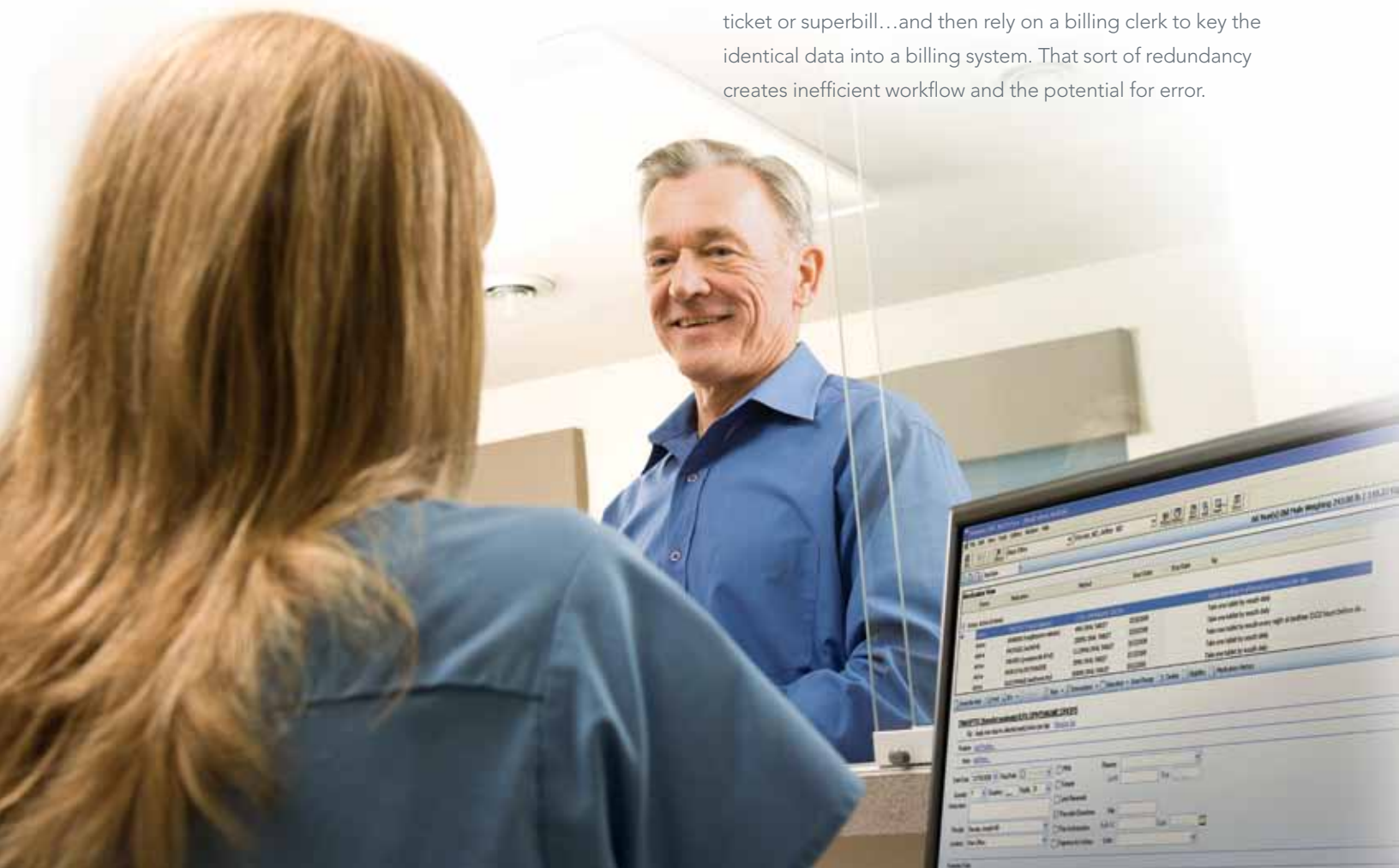
CMS, making it harder to qualify for incentives under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

You must be cognizant of EHR systems that merely scan or import records. In essence, you are left with a simple “picture” of the record. Information within that picture cannot be easily searched, measured, or analyzed. You would have to look at that “picture” then manually accumulate the “data” before you could analyze and use it as discrete data.

The important point: Because it isn’t computer-readable, “unstructured,” “non-discrete” data cannot be used in raw form for data analysis. Instead, using NextGen’s discrete data, successful extraction, reporting, analysis, and interoperability are easily accomplished.

Benefits to workflow and bottom-line

Many EHR software solutions require you to dictate diagnosis and procedure...then mark the same information on a charge ticket or superbill...and then rely on a billing clerk to key the identical data into a billing system. That sort of redundancy creates inefficient workflow and the potential for error.



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As you enter a diagnosis and procedure into NextGen EHR, however, the full benefit of advanced automation begins to shine. The information is captured as individual data points the moment you put them into the record, allowing submission directly into a billing system – minimizing the opportunity for error, without slowing your workflow.

Other advantages gained through the NextGen EHR:

- Meeting Meaningful Use criteria. Because individual data fields are easily extracted and reported, the system can help providers apply for the \$44,000 Meaningful Use incentive offered by the ARRA. For example, a provider can read a patient's treatment plan in text format, but do little else with it. That same information as discrete data can be used for automated outcomes reporting.
- Generating electronic prescribing payments. Discrete data can specifically identify medications, start/stop dates, SIG, physician DEA codes, and more—important aspects of electronic prescribing capability and the potential bonus that goes with it.
- Qualifying for quality reporting incentives. With the ability to capture discrete data points for some quality initiatives (such as select PQRI measures), data can be aggregated by the NextGen EHR and sent to the payer via registry function. No extra steps are required to track data or bill special codes. Proper documentation is all that's necessary.
- Fostering health information exchange (HIE). Orthopedic physicians typically see more "new" patients than many other specialties; perhaps a family physician wants you to evaluate and treat a patient who will then return to the family practice. It generally costs you valuable staff time to get the patient's initial demographic and insurance information, history data, and more. (Not to mention problems with missing or erroneously-entered information.) IT solutions that capture discrete data, like the NextGen EHR, allow you to simply upload records

from the family physician and immediately use them within your own system.

- Reducing transcription costs. Easy-to-use and customizable templates help minimize the amount of free text you must document for each patient; you may need to dictate 10-20 words per patient visit rather than 300-900. Free text is only needed to collect unique information not possible to collect discretely. With dictation significantly reduced, so are your transcription costs.

Clinical decision support

Orthopedic physicians are bombarded with reports. Take the patient who presents with a broken leg. You'll likely receive a text-based radiology report, perhaps indicating a simple fracture of the right tibia and fibula. The report gives you the facts you need to treat your patient during the present encounter, so why should you care whether it's scanned into your EHR as a text field or entered as discrete data?

In past years, receiving and retrieving data quickly were the only essential factors. As technology has evolved, however, so have demands. Now you need tools that help you deliver the low-cost, high-quality care your patients expect.

NextGen EHR's capacity to aggregate data points puts the power of collective knowledge at your fingertips—bolstering the care and outcomes you give your patients. Our EHR supplies the three vital elements required to make this happen:

1. Capture of discrete data
2. Application of clinical algorithms
3. Comparison with other physicians' data

Here's how it works: Let's take a closer look at the fracture patient in our example above. During her visit, the provider documents that she is a fragile 85-year-old with type I diabetes mellitus and hypertensive heart disease. The acuity level of this patient obviously is much higher than that of a healthy 15-year-old with no comorbidities. The NextGen EHR collects, as discrete data elements, the patient's: age;

demographic information; history; secondary diagnoses (e.g., 250.01 for the diabetes and 402.10 for the heart disease); primary fracture diagnosis; and more.

Because each of those elements is computer-readable, clinical algorithms and logic can be applied to them. Through a repository function, your data can be aggregated with that of a multitude of other physicians.

The result: Evidence-based treatment recommendations that reflect both condition and acuity level. Guidelines can help you pursue the most favorable outcomes for each patient—all accomplished without adding any extra steps to your workflow.

Consider a few other clinical workflow benefits NextGen affords:

- Physician-friendly templates that ease collection of vital details, without limiting your documentation flow.
- “Favorites” buttons to help speed documentation for your often-seen, straightforward conditions (for example, ACL tear), enabling individual patient variations to be recorded with fewer clicks or keystrokes.

- Evidence-based guidelines to help guide and document the basis for treatment decisions.

The Foundation of future healthcare: discrete data

The use of health information technology to measure and improve patient outcomes is a key pillar on which the future of healthcare rests. That pillar is shaped from discrete data. Without it, Meaningful Use cannot be measured and the foundation for interoperability cannot be laid.

Orthopedic practices increasingly must use patient information to:

- Improve quality of care
- Safeguard patient safety
- Participate in pay-for-performance
- Maintain regulatory compliance
- Reduce overall costs

Through discrete data capture, the NextGen EHR allows you to seamlessly collect and report on all the individual details so essential to top-level achievement of these goals.

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