

## Eisenhower Medical Center Implements Vision for Integrated Patient Care

Eisenhower Medical Center (EMC) has provided high-quality, compassionate care to southern California's Coachella Valley community for more than 35 years through a full range of state-of-the-art diagnostic, treatment and emergency facilities. The not-for-profit health system is headquartered on a modern 130-acre campus in Rancho Mirage.

In addition to its acute-care facilities, EMC has four immediate care facilities and four primary-care clinics. Early in 2010, EMC opened a three-story, 92,000-square foot outpatient medical center in La Quinta. The entire 3rd floor is be dedicated to primary care services.

Eisenhower Medical Center (EMC), located in Rancho Mirage, Calif., is dedicated to providing the best possible care to the community it serves. Recently, EMC recognized that the population in its service area was growing but the number of primary-care physicians was not. As a result, the organization developed a new model of care, supported by an electronic health record (EHR) solution from McKesson and connectivity solutions from RelayHealth. Now, care is more accessible, physician workflow is more efficient, quality has been enhanced, and patients are more engaged in their own care.

### Challenges

Eisenhower Medical Center has had a strong reputation for excellent hospital care since its inception in 1971, when it opened its first facility. But several years ago EMC assessed the healthcare needs of the rapidly growing Coachella Valley community it serves and identified a growing shortage of primary care physicians. This problem has been exacerbated by the seasonal nature of the desert valley's population, which is higher in the pleasant winter months than in the hot summer months. It is estimated that the valley has only 60% of the primary care physicians necessary to support its growing population. To address the overarching healthcare needs of the community and make

healthcare more efficient, EMC implemented a shared information technology infrastructure across the enterprise.

"We wanted to make the patient's experience seamless, no matter where the patient presents within the EMC system," explains Debbie Bright, director, Ambulatory IT.

### Answers

EMC decided to build an integrated system focused not only on treating illness but also on a holistic approach to health across the continuum of care. The plan included a program to foster closer relationships between patients and their doctors by expanding primary care service locations and providing online connectivity.

A key part of achieving a seamless patient experience at EMC was the deployment of Horizon Ambulatory Care™, McKesson's integrated EHR solution, in the immediate and primary care clinics. EMC had previously deployed many applications in the Horizon Clinicals® solution suite from McKesson in its inpatient environments.

"Our goal with the clinics was to incorporate them into the whole clinical integration model that we are moving forward with," explains David Perez, chief information officer, EMC. "With an ambulatory

## At a Glance

### Organization

Eisenhower Medical Center  
Rancho Mirage, Calif.

- 313 beds
- Centers of excellence for cancer, cardiovascular, neuroscience and orthopedics
- Annenberg Center for Health Sciences
- Barbara Sinatra Children's Center
- Betty Ford Center
- Eisenhower Medical Associates: operates four primary care practices and four Immediate Care Clinics

### Solution Spotlight

- Horizon Ambulatory Care™
- webVisit®

### Critical Issues

- Seasonal fluctuations in patient population
- Inadequate supply of primary-care physicians
- Inefficient workflow
- Inaccessible patient records
- Patient–physician communication

### Results

- Enabled 24 providers to document approximately 3,400 patient encounters and write more than 4,000 electronic prescriptions per month in 2009
- Streamlined workflow so physicians can treat patients more efficiently
- Made the patient chart accessible from any location
- Increased patient satisfaction

EHR on the same platform as the hospital's, we could allow hospital physicians to see what had occurred with patients over at the clinic, and vice versa for providers at the clinic. By bringing together all of our applications on one platform, the patient record can follow the patient wherever he or she goes."

### Results

The enterprise EHR approach has enabled EMC to improve workflow, enhance quality and create a new model of care. Usage of the solution in the clinics has grown steadily since implementation. At the end of 2009, 24 providers were documenting approximately 3,400 patient encounters and writing more than 4,000 electronic prescriptions per month. Early in 2010, EMC rolled out Horizon Ambulatory Care to additional providers in two other locations. The rollout also has prepared the organization to apply for stimulus funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

### Improved Workflow

EMC physicians have found Horizon Ambulatory Care easy to learn and valuable in their daily practice. The custom templates in the charting module make documentation seamless. According to Bright, "Physicians report that their documentation has been streamlined, and that it's easier for them to document a review of systems and a history of present illness."

Physicians also value the system's e-prescribing functionality, which they deem to be superior to what they've used in the past.

Horizon Ambulatory Care enables physicians to improve the quality of care. Through its task management capabilities, the system supports coordinated, team-based medicine.

"Our providers are not based in one location. They travel between clinics," explains Russell Grant, M.D., director of the Express Clinics and a specialist in urgent care. "Horizon Ambulatory Care makes patient follow-up easier because the charts are accessible wherever the provider is working that day. Plus, each provider is able to work off other providers' worklists. Through this team effort, nothing falls through the cracks."

Joseph E. Scherger, M.D., Vice President, Primary Care, sees EHRs contributing more broadly to quality at the population level. "The EHR defines healthcare in the 21st century," explains Scherger. "You need to be able to look at not only your one patient's records but all of your patients' records. Quality is really the new finance. We're going to be accountable for the care that we deliver — for example, knowing at any given time what percentage of your diabetic patients are currently in control as measured by an up-to-date hemoglobin A1c blood test in their chart. There's an imperative for all doctors to plan for these changes."

## Enhanced Patient Experience

Clinicians at EMC perceive that Horizon Ambulatory Care has improved the patient experience within their health system. "There is never any doubt about what happened yesterday or the week before," says Rocio Ruelas, FNP, a nurse practitioner in the Immediate Care Clinic at Rancho Mirage. "No matter which location the patient goes to, we can review the chart and see exactly what happened during the last visit, what medications were prescribed, and what instructions were given at discharge. This capability increases the patient's confidence and makes the visit more efficient."

Scherger has found that using the electronic system directly with patients increases their involvement in understanding their health status and treatment plans. "Certainly, if a doctor has his back to the patient and is just entering data into the computer, that's not patient-friendly," he explains. "But if you've designed your office so that you can show the patient what is in their record right at the point of care, that's different. We have a big screen in the room that is on a swivel, so we can always include the patient inside their own record as part of the care, and that makes all the difference in the world. They appreciate being better informed."

## A New Model of Care

Scherger sees a direct link between the information technology tools available today and a new approach

to healthcare delivery. "What we do in medicine – new tests, new drugs, new procedures – changes frequently," explains Scherger. "But the 'come-and-get-it' visit-dependent model of care that has been here since the middle of the 20th century hasn't really changed. Now we have the ability to transform our care model. In this new model, care is continuous instead of episodic. It's strategically proactive instead of reactive. And patients can be directly involved in their care instead of being passive recipients. Each of those aspects is revolutionary. And the information systems from McKesson and connectivity solutions like webVisit® from RelayHealth are the tools that make transformation possible."

With the passage of ARRA, hospitals, physicians and the healthcare IT industry await details on final rules regarding qualification for the stimulus funds available for meaningful use of EHRs. EMC executives believe their organization is well positioned to receive funding.

"Although we're still not sure what the final definition of meaningful use will be, we've already begun the integration that is expected," says Perez. "Our CEO had a vision for an integrated model long before ARRA. He wanted to integrate the clinics and reach out to the affiliated physicians to create a clinical integration model throughout the entire valley. We're ahead of the curve."

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***Joseph E. Scherger, M.D.  
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