

At a Glance

Organization

Westshore Family Medicine
Muskegon, Mich.

- 7 physicians
- 2 physician assistants
- 1 nurse practitioner
- 2,400 patient visits per month
- Member of a local network comprised of 13 family practices and 50 providers

Solution Spotlight

- Practice Partner® Patient Records

Critical Issues

- Too much staff time dedicated to filing paper charts
- Lengthy dictation/transcription turnaround time
- Excessive pharmacy costs
- Need to track and administer preventive care services

Results

- Transcription time reduced by 33%
- Decreased staffing needs from 3.5 staff per full-time provider to 2.5
- Dramatically increased number of patients getting preventive procedures

Westshore Family Medicine Improving the Bottom Line in a Group Practice

As part of an electronic health record (EHR) pilot project, Westshore Family Medicine proved that indeed, electronic health records were better than paper charts. Above and beyond simply replacing the chart, Westshore was able to prove that an EHR has the capability to reduce costs by improving efficiency, while at the same time improving patient care. After implementation, Westshore was able to reduce numerous costs associated with inefficiencies and substantially increase the number of patients receiving recommended preventive services.

Challenges

In 1995, Westshore was the site of a pilot project to determine if an EHR could replace the paper chart — so they went shopping for an EHR. Westshore wasn't certain of what the outcome would hold, but was forward-looking and up for the challenge. According to Dr. Michael Banka, "We wanted to make our lives easier and improve patient care."

Answers

Westshore did a thorough search of the EHR systems available and decided on the Practice Partner® Patient Records medical office software system because of its ease of use, Dr. Banka confirms. Practice Partner Patient Records not only replaced the paper charts but also allowed the staff to work more efficiently.

The EHR system has reduced costs, reduced stress and improved patient care.

Results

Greater efficiency has led to decreased staffing needs and lower transcription costs. At Westshore, there are 2.5 staff members per full-time provider; at similar family practices without an EHR or medical office software, there are 3.5 staff members per full-time provider. Handling paper charts consumed a great deal of the staff's time. As Bea McLain, office manager, explains, "It amazed us how much time we spent handling paper charts and looking for missing charts. Not having to hunt them down freed up so much time for everyone. The frustration level went down considerably."

Before the implementation of Practice Partner Patient Records, progress notes were dictated and transcribed with a turnaround time of seven days. With Practice Partner Patient Records, turnaround time was reduced to one day. Overall, transcription time has been reduced by 33% — even with the addition of two new providers.

Pharmacy costs have also been reduced. When writing a prescription with Practice Partner Patient Records, the physician can easily check on the cost of a drug and, when alternatives are available, prescribe the least expensive.

Case Study

“We wanted to make our lives easier and improve patient care. We did a thorough search of the EHRs available and decided on the Practice Partner® Patient Records system because of its ease of use.”

Dr. Michael Banka, M.D.

Typically, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) allocate a certain dollar amount per prescription. At Westshore, pharmacy costs average about \$2 per member, per month less than the allocation; similar practices without an EHR are about \$4 over. Multiplied by 8,000 patients, the savings are considerable.

Practice Partner Patient Records is also an effective tool for improving patient care and enhancing revenues. When the patient record is accessed during an office visit, a reminder about recommended preventive services (such as immunizations and mammograms) pops up on the screen for the physician and patient to discuss.

The impact Practice Partner Patient Records makes in the number of patients getting preventive procedures can be dramatic. In Muskegon County, only 40% of women who should be getting mammograms get them. Among Westshore patients, the figure is 78%.

More children are getting their immunizations, too. “We did a comparison between our office and another office without an EHR to see what percentage of kids had received their immunizations at age two,” reported Dr. Banka, “37% of their kids and 94% of ours had been immunized. Only four kids in our office didn’t have their shots. The patients were all updated by the end of the day.”

What does the future hold for Westshore? Practice Partner Patient Records is still providing opportunities for increased efficiency and savings. For example, all Westshore patients requiring hospitalization are admitted to one of the local hospitals, and every week 700 pages of reports were received from the hospital. It took one full-time staff person to scan all those reports into the patient records.

Scanning reports is now a thing of the past. A health record interface has been established with the hospital and, in the future, reports will be downloaded into the patient record electronically.

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