

4 ESSENTIALS

FOR DERMATOLOGY

PRACTICE AUTOMATION



“Simply & effectively
deliver great outcomes”



Unmanaged complexity has long been considered a major roadblock to sustainable progress toward excellence.

Internationally famous executive coach and motivational speaker Tony Robbins teaches, "Complexity is the enemy of execution." Successful leaders have the ability to reduce highly complex issues down to their most simple core elements in order to execute well on what matters most.

For a busy dermatologist, the challenge of growing and improving the practice isn't a lack of options, but managing the fragmented complexity of ideas, solutions and technologies that are constantly thrown at you - particularly regarding medical office automation. And the world doesn't stand still. Important developments like

telemedicine and rural medical care delivery add additional levels of complexity to deal with.

The reality is, sorting through all the competing recommendations, details and opinions is extremely time consuming and potentially overwhelming - particularly since it's not your full-time job. It's hard work getting to the heart of the issue. 17th Century mathematician Blaise Pascal crystallized that challenge in the closing line of a letter to a colleague: "I'm sorry this letter is long. I did not have time to make it short."

The Heart of Medical Office Automation

Our objective in this eBook is to help bring clarity to the challenge of selecting and executing a medical office automation strategy that addresses all the complexities of dermatology practice and allows you to simply and effectively deliver great outcomes for your patients, providers and owners.

Drawing on decades of experience across tens of thousands of independent practices, we've distilled the complexity of medical office automation for dermatology to a few simple core elements that make the biggest difference in metrics that matter most. Each element summarizes a depth of underlying detail but acts as a guiding star or touchstone to help keep decisions on track and focused on highest priority options.

Last 10% = 90% Boost

While many fine medical office automation systems are on the market today with a dizzying array of features, claims

and capabilities, at the end of the day, unrelenting focus on four essential elements can make the difference between a practice bogging down in frustratingly persistent average performance, and breaking through to the next level of efficiency, patient outcomes and satisfaction, and practice profitability.

These four elements sound deceptively simple. Many commercial solutions offer 80-90% of what each element encompasses, particularly when isolated from the overall system. But in our experience, the last 10% makes 90% of the difference. Systems that are pieced together, that lack critical elements, don't communicate and interoperate, and are earth-bound can get you part way there, but will never achieve truly world-class capability. Cutting corners on any of these elements essentially cuts off the opportunity of achieving geometric improvements and hard-to-explain synergies.



Four Essentials

These four elements form the foundation for the type of improvement dermatology practices aspire to. The four are:



COMPLETE



UNIFIED



SMART



CLOUD

Don't be fooled. While they may seem overly simple, fully understanding and relentlessly executing on these core elements over time will make all the difference. We will explore each in more detail related to both general best medical office automation practices, as well as to dermatology-specific application.

ELEMENT #1: COMPLETE

This element refers to providing a complete roster of specialized tools for each role within the practice, including [scheduling] practice management, charting, claims and billing, and patient relationship management. A broad spectrum of capability within each functional area is essential to achieving high levels of efficiency and accuracy individually and overall.

The Present Capability Trap

Because each dermatology practice enters and progresses along the office automation continuum at a different point and pace, it's easy to be trapped into focus on a technology that addresses the current pressing challenge, but lacks additional tools and expansion capability to keep pace when the practice matures to the next level of sophistication. Essentially, the current crisis obscures the bigger picture of what the practice will require at the next level, and the next, and the next.

This can result in costly 'hopping' from one EHR to another, for example, or 'bolting-on' missing pieces as the practice grows into more sophisticated needs, erasing the gains delivered by a unified system (see *Element #2*).

Best Practice Examples

Beyond coverage of all functional areas of medical office automation, a complete system includes a depth of specialized tools ready for implementation as the practice and patients require them. Take, for example, patient portal and patient experience. A robust, user-friendly patient portal is a required starting point for any practice wanting to seriously interact with patients in a way that wins loyalty and delivers a highly positive patient interaction.

The next level up is patient experience or managing the practice's online reputation and virtual interaction with patients. This added capability is crucial to attracting and retaining today's increasingly consumer-oriented patient. Efficient management of this function requires sophisticated online tools. A practice focused on mastering the portal may not recognize the importance of having patient experience tools 'on deck,' integrated and optimized for the next phase of their growth.

The same could be said of telehealth. Who could have predicted the lightning speed, pandemic-induced adoption of telemedicine technology? In the heat of the battle, practices with automation systems that included a native telehealth option were able to easily ramp up an expanded capability within their familiar framework, rather than scrambling to glue together disparate systems and learn new platforms and interfaces.

Connecting the Dots

A complete tool set for dermatology includes tools engineered for the specific workflow of dermatologists and their practices. This would include functionality such as:

- Consolidating and summarizing hundreds of screens' worth of charting information into a concise practice dashboard that shows all clinical workflow elements in a single location and provides simple one-click 'drilldown' capability.
- Dermatology-specific charting tools including templates, image capture and handling facility, and virtual summary 'cards' that streamline access to essential visit-specific data in the chart.
- Automated upload and attachment to the patient chart for images and pictures captured during the visit and for lab results.
- Automated tracking of dermatology MACRA and MIPS compliance elements.
- Dermatology-specific tools to help manage referral tracking and CIE, including secure EPCS reporting.
- Claims and billing tools fine-tuned to maximize first-pass claims acceptance rates of dermatology-coded bills. This can dramatically reduce the revenue drain of re-submitting a claim (average cost of \$25) or failing to rework it at all - which is the case 65% of the time for the average practice.

ELEMENT #2: UNIFY

In a unified system, workflow elements work seamlessly together, passing key information to staff throughout the continuum of care. While this type of capability seems pretty self-evident, in reality it's quite difficult to pull off, and less common than you might expect.

Here's a quick example. Patient A Googles your clinic, likes what they read and decides to book an appointment. They go to your website or portal and book a new patient appointment for the following week with Dr. Z. The system recognizes a new patient appointment and sends a welcome email with portal login instructions, populates the portal with required and personalized intake forms, and creates automated reminders workflows. Patient A doesn't access the portal immediately, so automated reminders (text or email) go out at preset intervals until the pre-visit tasks are complete.

Billing and insurance information goes to your billing system. Demographics go to the scheduling and practice management, and clinical information automatically populates their new chart in the EHR. The day before the

appointment, insurance eligibility is checked electronically – oops! no longer covered. An automated message alerts Patient A to contact you and your designated staff is alerted to resolve the problem before the patient walks through your door (or magic telemedicine screen).

Okay...time to check in on your practice: In this automated example, how many manual hand-offs and non-automated steps would be involved in your current system to accomplish the same tasks?

Rural Health Litmus Test

The growing urgent need for improved rural health care highlights the crucial role a unified system plays in highly effective healthcare delivery. In rural environments where manual, high-touch workflows aren't an option, bringing telemedicine, charting, ePrescribing, staff and physician messaging, patient portal, education and scheduling, automated reminders and online patient onboarding together in one unified system allows each member of the delivery team to be fully engaged and integrated into a smooth, coordinated continuum of care.

Whether you are delivering remotely or in the clinic, unified workflows are a game-changer in optimization, efficiency, patient satisfaction and cost improvement.

Connecting the Dots

Examples of unified elements specific to dermatology practice might include:

- Online charge slips transfer charge data automatically and accurately to the billing system following an encounter, either in-office or through telemedicine.
- Unified messaging and task management between patients, staff and providers for handling prescriptions and refill requests, completing outstanding notes, reviewing documents and images, and managing interoffice and patient messages.
- Integration of specialized diagnostic and treatment equipment/facilities (imaging, lasers, etc.) into the scheduling, billing and cost tracking
- systems to ensure optimum patient comfort, utilization and cost control.
- Telemedicine and rural health options that include virtually the full capability of in-office visits.

“IN A UNIFIED SYSTEM,
WORKFLOW ELEMENTS WORK
SEAMLESSLY TOGETHER...
THROUGHOUT THE
CONTINUUM OF CARE.”



ELEMENT #3: SMART

As technology discussions increasingly gravitate to artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and smart everything, it may appear that technology advances are passing the independent practice by. While these innovations will no doubt make their way into the healthcare system over time, at a fundamental level, smart medical office systems provide processes and dashboards that are automated, reducing labor and improving information accuracy.

Put another way, the best systems make smart doctors and staff smarter by automatically collecting, aggregating, tracking and visualizing information crucial to their jobs, and automating labor-intensive tasks.

Easy-to-use dashboards provide customized views of tasks, workflow steps, handoffs and communications. Visual elements like task 'donuts', priority alerts and simple one-click drilldowns simultaneously boost efficiency and accuracy.

ELEMENT #4: 100% CLOUD

A true cloud-based system is foundational to building a consistently high-performing practice. A cloud platform lets you and your staff access all the key information and functionality needed to provide stellar patient service simply and securely through a browser or iPhone from virtually any location with Internet or data service.

Additionally, a cloud platform provides the highest levels of data security, speed and performance, unified storage, and automatic backup and updates – which means you get the latest edition of the software every time you log in.

A cloud-based system is the essential underlying technology that enables delivery of the potential benefits in all the other elements.

100% Gotcha

This is an area where meshing systems – part cloud, part server-based – can stymie performance and agility. Say a patient has an emergency while the physician is at a child's soccer game. The provider accesses the system from a mobile device, pulls up the patient's chart, and has an updated view of medications and lab results.

Automated processes eliminate manual tasks and significantly improve staff efficiency. Examples include direct submission of charge sheets to the billing system, automated patient payment posting, and automated posting of lab results to a patient's portal.

Analytics and Reporting

A smart platform can provide insights that may significantly improve a practice's focus and profitability. For example, tapping the unified database with easily customizable analytics tools and reports could identify highest profitability procedures, and match them with growing populations and most successful reimbursement plans in a way that benefits both doctors and patients.

Note that this element relies on element #2 to provide unified workflows and comprehensive, easily accessible data in order to take smart processes and analytics to the next level.

However, images, which are crucial to this particular case, are managed in a server-based system which doesn't interface with the mobile EHR. Getting 90% of the information needed still results in a sub-par encounter – or an unplanned trip back to the office.

When evaluating system fundamentals, thoroughly explore whether all key functionality is what is called 'native' cloud-based, meaning it was built from the ground up for the cloud. Systems that were converted from non-cloud-native software code often experience unanticipated and unexplained compatibility glitches that are productivity killers.

On-the-go and Growing

As practices grow and patients and doctors are more on the go, the importance of a fully cloud-based system becomes more apparent. Doctors who practice at multiple clinics will find a cloud-based system gives them a completely identical experience no matter where they are working that day. And patients interfacing with providers and staff remotely find their seamless encounter compares favorably with other online shopping and service experiences they've become accustomed to.

Also, a cloud-based system is the most accurate and economical way to manage

Connecting the Dots

In dermatology, these examples of specific smart features can make a difference in your overall practice performance:

- Utilize analytics and tracking to determine highest and lowest profitability procedures and why.
- Track provider efficiency and profitability contribution by procedure, location, payor, or other key metrics to improve accountability and return.
- Set automated alarms on rooming assignments to ensure patients are efficiently attended to for procedures and moved through the workflow.
- Send automated follow up and reminder messages to specific segments of your patient population by age, diagnosis, risk factor, recent procedure or other key factors for optimum patient care.

multiple locations. Many growing practices find that managing multi-location scheduling, billing, charting and security with a server-based system can be extremely challenging if not impossible. And IT management costs are typically significantly lower in a cloud system that eliminates servers, maintenance, updates and additional on-site security technology.

Connecting the Dots

Dermatology-specific benefits of a 100% cloud-based system could include:

- Seamless, accurate and identical experience for providers and staff between facilities or rotation schedules
- Highest levels of security and ease of access from any remote location.
- Automatically and continuously updated software and code sets, particularly those related to optimized coding and billing for dermatology and related payors, and MACRA and MIPS compliance.
- Lower cost, fewer technology headaches. The elimination of onsite servers and related equipment reduces overall IT cost and removes update and security issues.

Complex to Simple

Regardless of how complex or frustrating your medical office automation challenge may be, dedicated focus on these four deceptively simple elements will help ensure significant improvement in your dermatology practice results. Apply them carefully in vendor selection and you will find a solution that is simple, manageable and well suited to you and your patients.

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