FAMILY PRACTICE

David Webster, MD

Kileen, Texas

CLINIC PROFILE

Providers: One Physician, Two nures practitioners

Specialties Served: Family Medicine

AdvancedMD Client Since: 2007

Technology Profile: AdvancedMD billing and practice management systems running in a cloud-computing environment, with lab and consulting physician reports automated through the AdvancedMD integrated EHR module. Solution includes: scheduling, e-eligibility, electronic charge sheet and comprehensive claims and billing management. Users access the system securely anytime, from anywhere via an Internet-connected computer.

Practice Highlights: Family practice medicine particularly suited to a highly mobile, military-oriented population. The practice is situated close to Ft. Hood, TX and provides services specific to this patient panel, including weight counseling, HCG and other military-related issues.

ABSTRACT

This active family practice found its paper-based practice management and outsourced billing solutions increasingly inadequate to meet the needs of a high turnover, high volume practice. Particular challenges included scheduling inefficiencies, eligibility verification bottlenecks, billing costs and inaccuracy, and a large volume of labs and consulting reports that required immediate attention and action. AdvancedMD was selected to address these issues, and implementation was accomplished by a former billing provider who researched the system online and set it up prior to bringing it into the office. The practice not only saw scheduling inefficiencies disappear, but workflow improvement and patient throughput increased measurably. Eligibility roadblocks were eliminated, and richer data significantly increased patient portion payment collection. FTEs required for billing decreased from three to a one, monthly costs decreased, and bottom line profitability improved by 10-15%. Providers now access all labs and reports electronically any time, anywhere, and state that "With this system, it's actually difficult to miss an abnormal lab or not act on an abnormal value."

THE PROBLEM

This busy solo family practice ran on a paper-based practice management system with outsourced billing, struggling to deal with the many challenges unique to family practice medicine. The diversity characteristic of family practice presents special challenges in scheduling, billing, eligibility and managing labs and consulting reports. With close proximity to Fort Hood, this practice has a higher than normal turnover of new patients cycling through on assignment.

"Family practice is logistically very challenging because of the broad range of conditions we see," said Karin Marina, office manager for the practice. "I worked previously for an orthopedic specialist, and in many ways the management task was simpler." Scheduling alone can be quite complex, particularly using a paper-based system. "To change or re-schedule, we had to flip through page-by-page to find the patient or an open slot," said Marina. "It was very time consuming."

The practice's outsourced billing solution, while adequate, appeared to be somewhat inefficient, and reporting and control were always a challenge. "We had 2-3 billers assigned to our account, and the cost seemed a bit high," said Dr. Webster.

Insurance eligibility was another major bottleneck in the non-automated office. "When we got a new patient up front, we essentially had to stop the practice to verify benefits with the insurance company," said Marina. Manual verification can be a time-intensive, complex process. "We had to call the insurance company and wait on hold a lot, or wait for the information to be faxed. It can make for a long, complicated day."

Family practice also deals with a large volume of test results and consulting physician reports that are crucial to timely, effective, well-documented care. "Being in solo practice, I have a tremendous number of reports coming in from labs and consultants," said Dr. Webster. "Under the old system, they would stack up on my desk. There was always the chance they could get lost or misplaced. I was totally dependent on my staff to keep track of them and make sure I was able to review and act on them."

> "The AdvancedMD billing system saves money on a monthly basis, plus gives us much better control," said Dr. Webster. "When we moved over to this system, we saw a 10-15% improvement in the bottom line."
>
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In 2006 the practice began exploring alternatives to its outsourced billing service and paper-based practice management. "I was doing Dr. Webster's billing through another family practice office at the time," said Gloria Johnson, billing manager for the practice. "I learned about AdvancedMD online and set the practice up at home before I came on board full time. It was very easy to learn and use."

The startup went smoothly, and the practice now runs on the AdvancedMD cloud system, including sophisticated claims, billing, scheduling, e-eligibility and lab/consulting report

management solutions, all for a single, competitive monthly fee. The hosted system provides anytime, anywhere access to select staff members without the need for additional on-site servers and computer equipment.

"Other companies made their offers, but they required so much more money up front," said Johnson. "I've seen a lot of different systems in my 18 years in billing. If you are looking for an easy-to-learn, cost-effective solution, AdvancedMD is your answer."

THE OUTCOME

The unique challenges faced by this practice under the previous solution have each been resolved in ways that improve efficiency, profitability and patient care.

Streamlined Workflow

The flexibility and depth of features in the AdvancedMD scheduling system help to significantly streamline the entire workflow of the office. "I do a lot of color coding – separate colors for the doc, nurse practitioners and procedures," said Marina. "For example, you don't want six month follow-ups back to back – we can see that at a glance and strategize to get the best out of each day and the most patients through."

The providers also find that the automated scheduling – with anytime, anywhere access – improves their efficiency. "I can access it remotely and see what is coming up and what I need to anticipate," said Dr. Webster. "It helps us keep clear patient records without thumbing through a lot of paperwork."

Bottom-line Billing Improvement

Bringing billing in-house improved efficiency in this key area of the practice, which had a measureable positive financial impact. In lieu of three dedicated outsourced billers, the practice now runs a more efficient, more profitable billing operation with a single FTE.

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The system helps ensure that billing is fast and accurate, with features that scrub claims and double check coding levels. "It makes sure claims go out clean, and that collections are efficient," said Dr. Webster. "It also helps clarify E/M charges that describe level of care and the level of coding that goes along with it."

Eligibility-driven Efficiency

The AdvancedMD e-Eligibility feature further streamlines workflow while helping ensure patient balances are optimally collected. "When a new patient comes in, I input the information, hit the button, and pow, it's right there," said Marina. "It's like an instant gift – really nice to have."

The system not only verifies coverage, but provides details such as co-pays, deductibles and patient portion to be satisfied. The practice finds this invaluable in improving collections from patients. "This is all critical detail so we can collect up-front. Otherwise, 70% of the time you're not going to get it," said Marina. "Due to this, our patient payment rate has increased dramatically."

Rich Reporting

The automated reporting features in AdvancedMD help the practice stay on top of both patient care and profitable operation. "The lab and consulting reports that used to stack up on my desk now come in digitally, and I can access them from a laptop anywhere – in the office, at home, traveling on business or pleasure," said Dr. Webster. "With this system, it's actually difficult to miss an abnormal lab or not act on an abnormal value when it comes through."

Better reporting has made the practice a better business as well. "Before AdvancedMD, we needed a better way to get data to make practice business decisions based on where we've come from and where we want to go," said Dr. Webster. "This system gives me more information for business-based decisions on how I want to run my practice."

Indispensible

AdvancedMD has become an indispensible part of this practice's workflow, patient care and profitability. "The first thing I do in the morning is log into AdvancedMD," said Marina. "And the last thing I do when I go home in the afternoon is log out of AdvancedMD. It helps me in every aspect of this office."

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