AdvancedMD

FAMILY PRACTICE

La Loma Medical Center

Oakland & Stockton, California

CLINIC PROFILE

Providers: Esteban Lovato, MD; Maureen Ashiku, FNP; Rosa Heredia, FNP

Specialties Served: Family Practice

AdvancedMD Client Since: 2012

Technology Profile: La Loma implemented AdvancedMD Electronic Health Record (EHR) and Practice Management (PM) in August 2012 for an all-in-one alternative to multiple client/server systems. Facing the challenges associated with two locations, the practice implemented AdvancedMD as a cloud solution for billing, claim processing, record management and scheduling.

Practice Highlights: La Loma is a busy family practice offering a wide scope of services for chronic illnesses, acute care, industrial accidents, and well-patient care. Serving as many as 70 patients per day, this growing two-location medical center has extended hours for weekend and evening appointments.

> "AdvancedMD has prolonged my dedication to stay in private practice for years to come."
>
> **Esteban Lavato, MD**

ABSTRACT
This bustling, two-location family practice sought an all-in-one alternative to the many PM and EHR systems they had tried during 20 years of business. Frustrated with disparate programs that required hours of data entry and diverted time away from patients, La Loma Medical Center chose AdvancedMD for its comprehensive features, superior interoperability and top-of-class remote access capabilities, including apps for iPad and iPhone.

THE PROBLEM

Two Locations, Two Systems, Big Headaches

Although the two offices were only 50 miles apart, the La Loma Medical Center hadn't found the right technological tools to bridge the gap between their Stockton and Oakland locations. They had purchased seemingly budget-friendly EHR and PM products as a way to limit overhead costs. But, they soon discovered high labor costs counteracted any savings from a lower price tag. "We tried many low-cost systems," Dr. Lovato explains, "but we ended up spending more time on staff labor."

To compound the problem, La Loma utilized separate client/server systems for PM and EHR, which required hours of tedious, redundant data entry.

With over 20 new patients a day, staff time was wasted on data entry, diverting time away from patients and draining profits. Marisol Bueno, Office and Billing Manager, recalls the hassle, "It was bit chaotic—we had to input the same patient information in two systems. It wasn't integrated into one patient demographic sheet."

Dr. Lovato claims even the simplest tasks seemed cumbersome with multiple systems: "If we would transfer the phones from one location to the other, staff couldn't make appointments or answer billing questions, because the systems didn't talk to each other."

Having used other slow, lackluster web-based programs, Dr. Lovato returned to a client-server model. But he had one goal when selecting a new software partner last year: "We needed a good web-based system that was fast enough to meet our needs."

Bothersome Billing, Clunky Claim Submission

Family practices have the unique challenge of managing dozens of CPT and ICD-9 codes for both children and adults, as well as urgent care codes. "We see every kind of patient possible," says Bueno. "That can make billing difficult."

Billing staff had to wait for Dr. Lovato to finish his notes, as many of the CPT codes were not in the system. "Then I had to manually input the visit information from the EHR into our practice management system," Bueno recalls.

Claim submission was not any smoother. Without eRemittance, La Loma had to manually manage claims. "We would have to wait for the EOB. Then we had to find the patient, post the charge, and process the write-off—it was really draining," Bueno says of their old, time-intensive process.

Additionally, staff wasn't notified of a claim problem until a denial letter arrived up to three weeks later—causing a major disruption to cash flow. Dr. Lovato saw the challenges of manual billing and submitting claims for thousands of patients. He explains, "In the past we would often wait six or eight weeks before we got paid."

Tied to the Office, Buried in Paperwork Dr. Lovato, who became a physician to give back to his community, found he was spending more and more time on administrative tasks rather than engaging with patients.

He found that his goal to positively impact the Spanish-speaking community he grew up in was hampered by piles and piles of paperwork. "I didn't go into medicine to do business," he reflects, "but if you want to treat a patient, you have to make your practice run well."

Dr. Lovato claims some of his colleagues have left private practice because of these administrative hassles: "I think one of the biggest reason people [leave private practice] is because of the paperwork—it becomes such a large percentage of what physicians are doing."

Charting was taking time away from both his patients and personal life. Without a streamlined, customizable EHR, Dr. Lovato felt tethered to the office. Manual notes and paper charts meant hours every day and evening entering patient visit details.

Dr. Lovato also felt he wasn't able to provide the best possible service to patients who called with urgent needs after hours. " It was very difficult dealing with after-hour calls, because I would not have access to the patient information while I was at home," he says.

The AdvancedMD Solution

Looking for an answer to both its EHR and PM challenges, La Loma adopted both AdvancedMD solutions in August 2012.

Committed to private practice, Dr. Lovato found AdvancedMD had the tools to maximize financial health while emphasizing patient care. Integrated EHR, sophisticated billing,

eRemittance and iPad capabilities have changed the way La Loma serves patients.

"The practice management tools are very well suited for family practice," reports Dr. Lovato. "It has been a wonderful addition to this office."

THE OUTCOME
In only a year with AdvancedMD, La Loma Medical Center has experienced a remarkable improvement in cash flow, patient experience, and productivity. By streamlining the practice's technology, Dr. Lovato and his staff can better focus on patients while adding more revenue to the bottom line. AdvancedMD also delivered freedom and flexibility the practice just didn't get with former client/server systems.

One Solution for Many Challenges
With AdvancedMD, La Loma staff no longer fumbles with systems that don't interact with one another. "Having an integrated system saves us a lot of staff time," says Dr. Lovato. "What that means is that our overhead is a lot more manageable. Our staff is freed up to deal with patients and provide better service and quality of care."

The integrated system cut visit times, providing a better patient experience and the ability to serve more community members. "Our staff," Lovato says, "is able to focus on more important tasks then data entry."

Bueno agrees that patients have noticed the improvement in service since AdvancedMD implementation. She says, "It decreases the time they have to spend here—they are helped within minutes."

Bueno has also seen how a timesaving integrated solution has improved morale. "We really like AdvancedMD," Bueno says. "We have all the patient information in one place." She also notes that operating two locations became much easier, "We can connect both offices, which we weren't able to do before."

Better Bottom Line
AdvancedMD gave Dr. Lovato and his staff the tools they needed to bill smarter and improve their bottom line. "The billing functions of AdvancedMD is second to none that we've seen," reports Dr. Lovato, "and we've used several systems in the past 15 years."

Bueno knows AdvancedMD has vastly improved their billing. "I used to spend two hours a day billing with the other software," she recalls, "now I spend maybe 30 minutes." Additionally, billing for both the Oakland and Stockton offices are done through one convenient platform. Their processes have improved so greatly, patients are often billed before leaving the office.

Now able to utilize eRemittance features with AdvancedMD, processing insurance claims is painless. "Posting charges is now done electronically—we don't even have to input write off codes," Bueno says, "it's all just done for us." With few claim denials, payment-processing time is cut by weeks.

Claim Inspector from AdvancedMD has helped La Loma tame claim rejections; it automatically runs edits on each claim for CCI, HIPAA, LCD, and carrier-specific requirements resulting in a 95% or higher first-pass acceptance rate. "It allows us to know if something is wrong with the claim even before we bill—we just don't have very many denials with AdvancedMD," she explains. This means more revenue and better financial health for the practice.

Better Care from Anywhere

La Loma now has modern, flexible options for accessing patient records. "One of the best things about AdvancedMD is that it's very flexible. We use laptops. We use iPads," says Dr. Lovato, who has removed desktop computers from exam rooms.

The iPhone app has dramatically reduced the time Dr. Lovato spends charting. He explains, "With the iPhone app I am able to dictate messages and orders for each patient after the visit— cutting my documenting time by 30%." He also uses his iPad to communicate with medical assistants who may be in another part of the office.

While out of the office, Dr. Lovato gained new freedom and flexibility with the remote capabilities of AdvancedMD. "The iPad app has been a game-changer for this practice," reports Dr. Lovato, "I have access to view all my patient notes, demographics, insurance and medications."

He feels AdvancedMD has limited his liability exposure by having all patient information at his fingertips, especially for urgent or after-hours calls. The iPad application is seamlessly and instantly integrated with the cloud-based EHR: "I have access right there on my laptop or iPad, so I can answer the calls with good knowledge that I have a complete picture of what is happening with the patient."

He finds that accessing this data on his iPad mini has unexpectedly provided him with a better work-life balance: "I am liberated by being able to attend my son's basketball game or a lunch and still have access to patient data on a very small device." Able to assist patients while out of the office, Dr. Lovato enjoys a newfound freedom. "A situation that would've caused be stress before," he says, "can be taken care of in just a few seconds."

SUMMARY

Dr. Lovato has no doubt made the right choice with AdvancedMD. "The return on investment," he says, "is almost immeasurable."

In one year, La Loma Medical Center has streamlined practice management processes over two locations, increased patient load, modernized record management, and added more revenue to the bottom line. The remote access capabilities allows Dr. Lovato to enjoy a better work-life balance by accessing patient information through his iPad from wherever he may be.

But, what is most important to Dr. Lovato is that AdvancedMD allows him to achieve the goal he set when becoming a physician—helping members of his community. "I think a successful private practice is defined by having a good relationship with your patients. That means they are satisfied and have received good quality healthcare," he explains, "to me that's really a mark of a successful practice."