

## FAMILY PRACTICE

### Dr. Steve Wampler

Greenhill, Alabama

#### CLINIC PROFILE

**Providers:** One physician, Two nurse practitioners


**Specialties Served:** Family Practice

**AdvancedMD Client Since:** 2007

**Technology Profile:** The practice moved from a paper-based system to the AdvancedMD cloud practice management solution in 2007, running over a T1, as broadband is unavailable. The integrated EHR was added in 2010.

Today the clinic runs the fully integrated AdvancedMD cloud software suite, including EHR, electronic charge slips, scheduling, eligibility verification and sophisticated billing. Providers and staff access the system anytime, anywhere through the cloud without the need for additional on-site servers and computer equipment.

**Practice Highlights:** This rural family practice serves a vital role in the community, caring for a much wider range of needs than a typical family practice tied into a community of referable specialists. Often filling an essential emergency care role – everything from reattaching severed fingers to gunshot wounds or tractor accidents – Dr. Wampler feels highly connected to his patients and their health. “On average, ten people a week stop by my house to see if I can keep them from going to the hospital – I don’t think that happens normally in family practice,” he says. “It’s challenging, fun, and the neatest thing is that you’re taking care of your neighbors.”



“Everybody still does basically the same thing; they just do it in a different and better way that’s more efficient.”

**Steve Wampler, MD**

#### ABSTRACT

This rural family practice deals with a wide variety of medical situations, including emergencies and issues that would be referred to a specialist in an urban setting. As a result, the crush of paperwork became more and more challenging, particularly with the high demand for after-hours and offsite encounters. The clinic overcame lack of broadband access by installing a T1 line, and implemented the AdvancedMD cloud practice management and EHR systems. Following an initial slowdown, the practice realized significant improvements in information access, quality of care, and provider and staff efficiency. The clinic achieved EHR meaningful use attestation in 2011, runs at 110% of its pre-EHR volume, and enjoys the associated financial benefits.

#### THE PROBLEM

For this highly diversified family practice, managing the large number paper charts that needed to be accessed quickly – and often without advanced notice – was a continual struggle and significant drain on staff productivity. “We were looking for charts everywhere, running around saying, ‘Have you seen Mr. So-and-So’s chart?’” said Tammy Carter, office manager for Dr. Wampler. “It was a constant battle, plus trying to find if a patient’s labs had come in.”

Dr. Wampler concurs with the toll exacted on his staff. “The front office people may spend between two to four hours a day looking for the chart I had misplaced. We always found them, but I’m not going in the room to see the patient without the chart.”

Handwritten notes in the charts also often slowed staff and challenged their ability to always provide a highly professional quality of care.

Juggling schedules for three providers with an unpredictable patient flow and volume presented a constant challenge for the clinic’s staff. “Scheduling is a big deal, because we’re trying to make everybody happy, make sure patients are insurance-eligible, and collect co-pays at the front while squeezing in the walk-in emergencies,” said Carter. “Communicating with the clinical side and making sure they had the insurance information for labs was always difficult.”

Being constantly available for patients – even at home – presented a particular challenge for Dr. Wampler in being able to access timely patient information. “I got calls at home, and couldn’t pull up a patient’s information,” said Dr. Wampler. “I’d average ten people a week stopping by the house.”

Staff also had a difficult time keeping up with providers constantly on the go, and not always in the office. “It was extremely hard to be on call and not know what the physician or nurse practitioner had done that day, or what lab work was drawn,” said Carter. “You really didn’t know what was being done for the patient that day.”

Vacation wasn’t always a stress-free experience for this highly-demanded physician. “Before the EMR, vacation was scary,” said Dr. Wampler. “I work with two nurse practitioners who are very good, but I still had a back-up physician, and he’s 20 minutes away.”

## The AdvancedMD Solution

Moving from paper to an automated practice management and EHR solution was a high priority for this practice, but connectivity to the cloud proved to be a challenge in this rural setting. “There is no high speed Internet, and AT&T has no plans of bringing it up this far,” said Dr. Wampler.

However, the potential benefits outweighed the technical challenges, and the clinic moved ahead first with the practice management system. “We have a T1 because there is no DSL in this area,” said Dr. Wampler. “We had to go way out and search for avenues to apply the technology that’s available.”

With the practice management side working well, the clinic then implemented the AdvancedMD EHR. “When AdvancedMD acquired a functional EHR, it was an easy choice because the PM side had always worked so well,” said Dr. Wampler. “It’s so nice to have both of them together.”

With implementation of the EHR, the clinic continued to show technical leadership and creative adaptability in the face of challenges. “I don’t chart the encounters, I have a scribe who has been with me since day one. She knows the system better than I do,” said Dr. Wampler. “There is some connection to other providers and hospitals, so it has already reduced duplication and makes it easier to document, document, document – as the malpractice lawyers tell us to do.”

The clinic has also been a leader in qualifying for meaningful use reimbursements. “We were one of the 5% that attested in the last year, and we couldn’t have done it without AdvancedMD,” said Dr. Wampler. “We could look at how we did every day, week or month and make improvements, like sending more e-prescriptions or more medication records. When we weren’t hitting the numbers we called AdvancedMD and they provided a lot of support.”

### THE OUTCOME

With the AdvancedMD system, flow and accessibility of patient data has dramatically improved. “The charts and the lab work were really big issues for us,” said Carter. “Being able to go right to the chart with the associated labs is absolutely a big plus. They are readable, and we are getting fast enough that it’s feasible at this time.”

Anytime, anywhere access to the system has greatly simplified staff and providers’ lives while improving quality of care and accuracy of documentation. “I get a lot of calls at home (our home phone is listed in the church directory), and I can stay on the phone with them, pull up their record and have a good knowledge of their medical history,” said Dr. Wampler. “It’s nice having an Internet-based EHR. I couldn’t do that with a software-only based system.”

Staff and providers can all stay on the same page with every patient regardless of when care is rendered. “It’s wonderful. If I get called from the answering service at home, I open up the laptop and find what I need to know,” said Carter. “Like what medications they’re on, what the physician or nurse practitioners have done that day, or lab work that has been done...it’s really easy.” And scheduling an unpredictable patient panel is simple with the system’s sophisticated scheduling functions.

### Real Vacations

Vacations have also become much less stressful for the doctor and simpler to manage for staff. “This winter when I went skiing in Colorado, if they had something to send me, like an x-ray, I could see it within 30 minutes online through our EHR,” said Dr. Wampler. “If there’s a problem, I can look through the patient’s past history and it’s all there. It has cut the chain from the ball-and-chain.”

Even home life has improved since implementation of the EHR. “I still do quite a bit of charting at home, but I do it in the presence of my family with the laptop instead of staying in the office and finishing sometimes until 10 o’clock at night,” said Dr. Wampler. “It’s made my life much more manageable.”

### Efficiency Improvements

While staffing functions have essentially remained unchanged since implementation of the EHR, the clinic has realized significant improvements in efficiency. “Everybody still does basically the same thing; they just do it in a different and better way that’s more efficient,” said Dr. Wampler. “Where a lot of times they were here until 7 or 8 o’clock, now most of the time they’re out at 5:30.”

Dr. Wampler also enjoys efficiencies provided by an integrated solution in dealing with both the clinical and practice management side of patient interactions. “If I’m on the EHR side in a patient’s chart and I flip to the patient management side, it goes right to that person instead of me opening another page. I don’t think you would have that if they were not bundled. There are a lot of advantages in having one provider for both patient management and EHR.”

### Highly Popular Patient Portal

As part of meaningful use attestation, the clinic implemented the popular AdvancedMD cloud patient portal. Patients use the portal to enter prescription requests and schedule appointments, saving staff many hours of phone time. Recently, the lab reporting capability has captured patient attention.

“[Patients] get to actually see the numbers instead of the nurse calling and saying it’s normal,” said Dr. Wampler. “Some people don’t ask for the numbers on the phone, but if they have it in front of them they can Google it and play with it. They love it.”

## SUMMARY

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