

PEDIATRICS

Whistlestop Pediatrics

Warrensburg, Missouri

CLINIC PROFILE

Providers: Two physicians: Victor Lovell, MD and Nedra Twillie, MD

Specialties Served: Pediatrics

AdvancedMD Client Since: 2012

Technology Profile: The clinic first installed the practice management suite including scheduling, eligibility verification and sophisticated billing. The fully integrated EHR will be phased in ahead of the Medicaid mandates in 2014. This will provide not only clinical charting and mandated reporting of immunizations, tracked illnesses, etc., but will seamlessly hand off charges to the EHR through an electronic charge capture function. Doctors and staff access the system anytime, anywhere through the cloud without the need for additional on-site servers and computer equipment.

Practice Highlights: This practice focuses on pediatric care for families in a largely low-income area. Physicians provide specialized pediatric care for a wide variety of child-related problems, and have an active referral process within the community as well as with specialists in neighboring Kansas City.

ABSTRACT

Serving a largely low-income area, Whistlestop Pediatrics faces ongoing financial pressure as nearly 80% of reimbursements come through Medicaid. With 2014 EHR mandates on the horizon, the clinic initiated a search for an automation solution that would simultaneously address clinical reporting and unique practice management needs. AdvancedMD provided the flexibility required and allowed the clinic to phase the system in first with practice management that significantly improved efficiencies in scheduling, billing and claims. The completely integrated EHR will smoothly phase in ahead of mandated Medicaid reporting requirements in 2014.


THE PROBLEM

Whistlestop Pediatrics faces challenges both unique to pediatrics and to their particular locale. As a factory town, Warrensburg is comprised of many families who face constant financial challenges. "Lots of men and women in this town work in the factory, and life revolves around whether you are going to get laid off or not," said Karen Malfy, office manager for Whistlestop Pediatrics. "About 75-80% of our patients come from low-income homes, so the large majority of our visits are paid by Medicaid."

Government mandates now require EHR implementation by 2014 in order to receive full Medicaid reimbursement – a major trial for a small, financially stretched practice. "Our docs are office-based and do very few procedures, so the revenues are a lot lower," said Malfy. "Just keeping afloat day-to-day is an ongoing challenge. Implementing the automated system would give us a little extra reimbursement per doctor."

This practice is also challenged with a higher than normal percentage of no-shows for scheduled appointments. "Parents have hundreds of excuses as to why they didn't show up or even call, but that doesn't help reimbursement," said Malfy. "We've kept time open for them and now have doctors and nurses sitting, waiting, no patient there, no reimbursement."

The billing system, while automated, still required a significant amount of manual manipulation. "We had to print it out of one system, put it into another system, then print it out of that system – along with all the additional paperwork – to send it in," said Charlotte Kientzy, practice billing manager. "It was very time consuming. We were in the Stone Age." Responsible party billing was also a major challenge with the old system. "You could have three kids with different last names, and not know they were related," said Kientzy. "It made billing especially complicated, and tracking them in the system was difficult."



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Charlotte Kientzy,
Practice billing manager

The AdvancedMD Solution

With the Federal deadline for EHR looming in the not-to-distant future, Whistlestop Pediatrics set about finding a system that would not only meet the charting and reporting requirements on the clinical side, but would also address their unique practice management needs.

Initially, the practice looked into adopting the system used by their affiliated hospital, but opted against it after seeing other clinics' experience with it. "It probably would have worked, but would have been a lot more work entering things," said Dr. Lovell. "Another practice in the area has been working on implementing it for many months, and it still isn't working. We didn't want to go through that."

The AdvancedMD complete, all-in-one solution was a key selection criteria. "I liked AdvancedMD for the entire package including practice management and EHR, all on a single database," said Kientzy.

Flexibility and customization were also crucial, particularly for the physicians. "The number one reason we ultimately went with AdvancedMD was because we can customize it to us. If we wanted to change something, we could do it," said Kientzy. "With other systems we evaluated, it was either 'you can do that, or you can't' – that was it."

The clinic first installed the practice management suite including scheduling, eligibility verification and sophisticated billing. Over time they will phase in the fully integrated EHR which will provide not only clinical charting and mandated reporting of immunizations, tracked illnesses, etc., but will seamlessly hand off charges to the EHR through an electronic charge capture function. Doctors and staff access the system anytime, anywhere through the cloud without the need for additional on site servers and computer equipment.

THE OUTCOME

The AdvancedMD solution helped Whistlestop Pediatrics deal with each of its key challenges in a way that streamlines workflows, improves reimbursement and positions the practice for smooth migration to compliance.

Mandate Compliance and Medicaid Reimbursement

The integrated practice management and EHR from AdvancedMD allows the practice to enjoy the full benefits of world-class cloud billing, scheduling and eligibility verification while they migrate to an EHR that is fully integrated and will meet all of the requirements of 2014 government mandates. "A few years ago, we started looking into different systems that would make our processes and work easier, would meet government mandates, and would make my life easier as a biller," said Kientzy. "With AdvancedMD we got everything in one package, and the ability to ensure that we get maximum allowable Medicaid reimbursement".

No-show Resolution

The lost reimbursement due to excessive no-shows has been dramatically reduced with the help of innovative features in the AdvancedMD scheduling system. The staff added a second column for each doctor and selectively overbooked to compensate. The wait list feature also allows the staff to work in lower-urgency visits – such as well-child and follow-ups – around slots that open up during the day. Flags in the system also help mitigate down time. "We can flag a person who is typically a no-show and book them at the end of the day," said Malfy. "If they don't show up, we can finish up other work or leave a little bit earlier."

Manual Billing Automation

The AdvancedMD billing system has significantly streamlined the billing operation and improved claim acceptance rates. "Before AdvancedMD, I had to check several different screens for charts and encounter forms," said Kientzy. "Now everything is on one page and I can make changes right there. My job is a lot easier."

The system's claim inspector helps ensure submission of only clean claims the first time. "Our claim acceptance rate has gone way up," said Kientzy. "The system won't let me submit them until they're fixed – which I can do on the spot. I can't explain how wonderful that little piece of the program is."

The all-in-one system also eliminates the complexity of dealing with a variety of different vendors who each provide a piece of the billing process. "Instead of dealing with a vendor for every different thing (eligibility, ePrescribe, clearinghouse, credit card terminal, etc.), with this solution everything you want is in one place," said Kientzy. "With AdvancedMD, everything is built in, and I only have to call one place for support. It's extremely nice!"

Responsible Party Identity

The responsible party option in the billing system has helped the practice further streamline billing tasks and quickly identify who to involve in resolving billing issues. "This option allows us to link family members with different last names together so we know they're related," said Kientzy. "It's very convenient in helping speed up the billing process."