

Case study

Cardiology Associates of Schenectady

With a staff of 22 cardiologists, seven physician assistants and several nurses, Cardiology Associates of Schenectady serves thousands of patients a week. From six offices and four acute care hospitals, the practice provides all cardiology services for the Schenectady, Gloversville, Amsterdam and surrounding areas in New York state.

“EHR has enabled us to become more efficient, reduce costs and improve patient safety and quality of care,” states Barry Lindenberg, M.D. The impact of EHR on the practice has been widespread, with all of the offices and all of the hospitals accessing the EHR. The same physicians who were originally opposed to going to electronic records now say they wouldn’t want to practice in any other way.”

CHALLENGES

Large and geographically dispersed, Cardiology Associates found it was becoming nearly impossible to manage the practice with paper charts. Both clinicians and administrative staff needed patient records to do their jobs, and the chart never seemed to be available at the right office. The practice had to do extensive shuffling of charts from office to office, and not having the chart available was interfering with their ability to practice good medicine.

SOLUTION

After comparing EHR vendors and finding many had fragmented programs, Cardiology Associates chose MEDENT Practice Management and EMR/EHR, a tightly integrated “all-in-one” product, from Community Computer Service. The software was CCHIT CertifiedSM in 2006 and 2007.

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Barry Lindenberg, M.D., founding member
Cardiology Associates of Schenectady

“One of the amazing features of EHR is obtaining lab results electronically,” states Dr. Lindenberg. “Often we graph medications and lab results together. The graph shows when we started a particular medication and when we stopped it and the impact this had on cholesterol or blood pressure. We use the graph directly with patients, particularly when the patient has questions about the efficacy of a medication. The graph is a great education tool and it helps with compliance. When I open the record, with a couple of clicks, I can share the graph with the patient. It’s instantaneous.”

“Another excellent feature and a capability I use every time I go to a patient chart is Individual Chart DM (Disease Management),” states Dr. Lindenberg. “I can immediately compare the patient’s cholesterol, LDL and medication with the DM criteria for our practice.”

Recently, Cardiology Associates directly interfaced their EKG and Holter monitor equipment with MEDENT using the Midmark interface. “We’ve found this to be a great advantage since we do several hundred EKGs every day,” explains Dr. Lindenberg. “Now we can view the EKG and see how the patient is doing before we see the patient, and getting information to the referring physician is much faster. Before the interface, we had to print the EKG on paper, hand write our interpretation and then have it scanned in. Now when we generate our notes electronically, with a click we can send them to the referring physician with a copy of the EKG.”

“MEDENT E-prescribing is a wonderful capability,” comments Dr. Lindenberg. “For patients it means they don’t have to make an extra trip to the pharmacy. Typically, patients had to make two trips: one to drop off the prescription and one to go back later to pick it up. With e-prescribing, we send the prescription when we see the patient, and the patient makes only one trip to the pharmacy. Because patients sometimes forget to fill prescriptions, it lessens the fear they won’t take the medication prescribed. SureScripts has done a study which shows there is improved compliance with e-prescribing.”

Cardiology Associates has found that e-prescribing is particularly valuable for elderly patients who no longer drive. They need someone to bring them to the office, and pharmacies deliver medications to their home. For these patients, not needing to go to the pharmacy greatly reduces stress. After their visit, the patient goes home and the prescription is delivered the next day. E-prescribing is valuable with refills as well. When a patient needs a refill, the pharmacy contacts the practice electronically and with a click the refill is authorized. Telephone calls are basically eliminated and the process is much more efficient.

Dr. Lindenberg states, “One of the things I love in dealing with Community Computer is the direct contact with the owners. Any time we’ve needed help, they’ve provided it. They’re strongly committed to strengthening the product based on customer input, and they work hard to ensure MEDENT is on the cutting edge.”

Cardiology Associates is proud that their practice has become a showcase. “Other practitioners are very envious of what we’ve done,” says Dr. Lindenberg. “I feel we’re fortunate we’ve worked with Community Computer. They’ve enabled

us to make our practice the best it can be, both for patients and referring physicians.”

RESULTS

With EHR, Cardiology Associates has achieved greater efficiency, reduced costs and improved patient safety and quality of care.

Because several hundred EKGs are done every day, not needing to scan them in saves significant time. Staff no longer spend hours printing, signing and mailing prescriptions and calling the pharmacy. With e-prescribing, it's impossible to prescribe a dose that is not available or write a wrong drug name on the prescription because the drug list is always up-to-date. The ability to instantaneously graph medications and results is a major timesaver and a great patient education tool. With individual chart DM, the cardiologist is reminded when the patient's treatment doesn't meet the practice's DM criteria.

“Good practice is having information readily available,” states Dr. Lindenberg. “Before EHR, we couldn't find the chart or the information we needed within the chart. Now we need only to click to get to the right place to find the information we need. And during off hours, all information remains accessible.”

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