

Case study

Family Care Medical Group

With 35 offices in the greater Syracuse, New York area, Family Care Medical Group serves 135,000 patients from cradle to grave. Sixty-five physicians, 40 physician assistants and nurse practitioners as well as additional mid-level nursing and administrative staff bring the number of employees to 500. As a multi-specialty group practice, providers are spread across the 35 offices, with a laboratory, billing, human resources and other central office functions located in downtown Syracuse.

“The Direct Project messaging and communication product provides an opportunity to directly communicate with other physicians,” states Dr. David Page, M.D., physician and co-founder of Family Care Medical Group, “and it simplifies the transmission of medical records. In the past, it was very difficult to do this kind of physician-to-physician exchange.”

CHALLENGES

Founded by 16 family physicians in 1995, Dr. Page served as Family Care Medical Group’s president for its first 17 years. Dr. Mitchell Brodey took over as president in 2002. From its inception, the practice used MEDENT® Practice Management. In 1999, the practice implemented MEDENT EMR. Family Care Medical Group streamlined many of its processes over the years but exchanges with specialists remained inefficient and cumbersome.

SOLUTION

In 2013, Family Care Medical Group implemented Direct messaging and communication product, which is provided as a service within MEDENT.

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David Page, M.D. family medicine physician
Family Care Medical Group

Family Care Medical Group has its own laboratory information system which interfaces with MEDENT. Medical equipment such as EKGs and vitals are integrated with MEDENT on an office by office basis. The practice uses MEDENT's Disease Management (DM) graphing capability, its DM formulas and DM tracking reports. "I frequently use the graphing capability for lab results," explains Dr. Page, "and on a daily basis we make extensive use of DM formulas. The DM tracking reports are specific to our practice, and we use them extensively."

In 2013 Family Care Medical Group began using Direct messaging and communication, which is provided as a service within MEDENT. "It provides an opportunity to directly communicate with other physicians," states Dr. Page, "and it simplifies the transmission of medical records. Direct is frequently used by specialists to communicate with primary care physicians. On a typical day I receive four or five transmissions from specialists whereas I initiate an exchange with a specialist about two times a month."

Recently Dr. Page was doing a pre-operative assessment of one of his patients prior to the patient's upcoming surgery. The results of the patient's EKG showed changes from the one done seven to eight years earlier. While the patient was still in the office, Dr. Page sought the immediate opinion of the patient's cardiologist. Using Direct, Dr. Page was able to electronically transmit the EKG results and engage in a conference with the cardiologist, who upon reviewing the EKG was able to conclude that the changes were related to the patient's pacemaker and were not significant.

"As a result of the transaction, the patient was able to avoid an unnecessary stress test and visit to the emergency room, and the surgery was able to proceed as planned," explains Dr. Page. "In the past, this kind of exchange between a primary care doctor and a specialist was very difficult to do. The EKG would have had to be faxed, and often it was not interpretable. With Direct, the data comes in an electronic document, and for the physician it is much cleaner to read. Since it goes directly into the patient's chart, it's also easier for administrative staff since there is no paper, and no filing is required."

Family Care Medical Group has been using the Patient Portal for several years, with implementation occurring office by office. "It's part of what must be in place for Meaningful Use Phase 2 in that a certain percent of patients need to have been actively using the Portal for a given length of time," states Dr. Page. "To get patients interested in the Portal, we have actively encouraged them to sign-up when they come in to the office. To encourage use we push test results out through the Portal and make a chart summary function available. Currently patients use the Portal primarily to make and cancel appointments, request refills and review test results."

"Meaningful Use (MU) has helped the practice with insurance contracting and with our success with patients," states Dr. Page. "Some of the criteria such as the paper performance programs which specify attributes for particular disease conditions result in healthier patients. We're certified as a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home, and we're currently in the process of recertification to maintain Level 3. Overall MU and Medical Home are a way to prepare for

changes in healthcare. It gives us a framework to prepare. Among physicians there are varying levels of acceptance. We're required to do things on which there is not a lot of data, and some of the patient results measurements are in areas over which physicians do not have a lot of influence. "

Dr. Page finds that MEDENT has great people, and he believes that as the complexity of healthcare changes the good relationship and open communication Family Care has with MEDENT's management is invaluable.

RESULTS

The streamlined, efficient communication between primary care physicians and specialists which Direct enables has had a positive impact on Family Care Medical Group in a number of areas, including more immediate, informed decisions and greater staff efficiency. "While Direct is better for physicians and staff, it is also better for patients in that frequently it avoids delays in patient care," states Dr. Page.