

Case study

The Wright Center for Primary Care

With three locations in the Scranton, Pennsylvania area, The Wright Center for Primary Care sees 300 to 350 patients a week, from newborns to the very elderly. Four primary care physicians (FT= 2.85), two nurse practitioners, two physician assistants and four nurses provide services, together with 50 residents from The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education who rotate through the clinic. In addition, one nurse practitioner sees patients at a maternal family center, and a physician assistant sees patients at a student health center. Total staff is 25. In 2011, The Wright Center achieved Meaningful Use and NCQA certification as a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home.

“After only 90 days, the Patient Portal has helped us become more efficient and had a positive impact on patient care,” states Dr. Jignesh Sheth, primary care physician at The Wright Center. “Phone calls have declined, replaced by messages over the Portal which can be better managed. And exchanges over the Portal are already documented in the EMR. Also, I was able to provide care to a patient in a foreign country.”

CHALLENGES

The practice was founded by Dr. Linda Thomas in 1999. It was acquired by Dr. Robert Wright in 2005 and became part of The Wright Center for Medical Education. When Dr. Thomas and Dr. Wright assessed future developments in the medical field, the trend to EMR was clear. They began using MEDENT Practice Management and EMR from Community Computer Service in 2006.

SOLUTION

In June, 2011, The Wright Center began use of the MEDENT Patient Portal.

“We have about 100 Disease Management formulas. They’re our ‘bible’ and are used with every patient.”

Tiffany Elkins, MEDENT Application Specialist
The Wright Center for Primary Care

The Wright Center for Primary Care uses the Lab Results Clearinghouse. They use menu choices and point and click to document patient visits, with no entry of free text. The practice's EKG and spirometry equipment is directly interfaced with MEDENT. Providers use e-prescribing and the associated drug alert, drug-drug interaction and drug-allergy capabilities.

"We make extensive use of the Disease Management (DM) formulas and have about 100 of them in use for our three clinics," explains Tiffany. "The DM formulas are our 'bible.' The medical assistants use DM formulas with patients before the doctor enters the office. The doctor adjusts the formulas, and residents print them out before they go in to see a patient. The DM formulas are forever changing. For example, we have ones specifically for Medicare and various insurers. Dr. Sheth creates Clinical Decision Support and evidence-based guidelines and puts them in to DM formulas."

"Remembering to cover dozens of areas is not something physicians are typically able to do," states Dr. Sheth. "Also, we use DM to graph items such as lab results, meds and vital signs and give a printed copy to the patient."

The Wright Center makes extensive use of MEDENT's DM tracking reports. The practice has a case manager who focuses on several chronic diseases and uses the DM tracking reports every day to make sure that patients get the care they need. As a Medical Home, the practice functions as a team, with the case manager reaching out to high risk patients.

The practice began introducing the Patient Portal to patients in the middle of 2011. "When a patient comes in who has not yet been introduced to the Portal, we give them an activation letter as well as a brochure," describes Dr. Sheth. "We have a generic support e-mail on our website. Patients e-mail their questions, and the receptionist is able to respond to most of them."

"Ninety days after introduction, about 65 percent of my patients and 40 to 45 percent of clinic patients use the Portal," explains Dr. Sheth. "I have patients from age 14 to age 78 who use the Portal. I thought older patients wouldn't use it but I've found that people 65 and above use it more extensively than younger patients. In some instances, caregivers for patients in their 90's use it on the patients' behalf. Since it's only when patients come for appointments that they are introduced to the Portal, about a year from now we'll have a better measure."

"Prior to the Portal, patients would phone, messages would go from the secretary to the nurse and then to the doctor," states Dr. Sheth. "A one-on-one with the doctor was not typical. With the Portal, patients get one-on-one with the doctor, and I like being able to look up information in the chart and think about what to advise before responding."

"Patients also use the Portal to update their history and request medication refills," continues Dr. Sheth. "I send messages to patients about their lab results, and patients are able to look at the results. We log calls, and even at this early stage the number has gone down. Calls to me have decreased by about 50 percent."

“The Portal has had a positive impact on patient care,” states Dr. Sheth. “I had a young female patient who was going abroad to study for a year. She was concerned about how she could get medical care. I urged her to sign-up for the Portal. Within the first week of her arrival in the foreign country, she sent me a message describing symptoms of a urinary tract infection and questioned what she should do. She had taken antibiotics with her, but none was the right medicine for the infection. I sent her a prescription over the Portal which she was able to print out and have filled within two hours of her message to me.”

“The tight integration of the Portal with the MEDENT system is very valuable,” states Dr. Sheth. “Whether an exchange with a patient is on the phone or in e-mail, it has to be documented. With a Portal message the exchange is already documented in the MEDENT EMR. It would be very frustrating to have to do it two times.”

Dr. Sheth has been very happy with his overall experience with Community Computer. “The customer service and support is fantastic!” exclaims Dr. Sheth. “I am very happy with the service and with the software. Also, when I went for training, I was pleased that a senior manager of the company was very receptive and welcoming.”

RESULTS

Some of the most significant ways the MEDENT system has impacted The Wright Center for Primary Care are in the areas of documentation and access. “Documentation is much easier compared to paper,” comments Dr. Sheth, “and being able to access the EMR from multiple locations provides tremendous flexibility. We can access the system from home as well as in the office.”

Both providers and administrative staff have reacted positively to the Portal. The number of phone calls has declined, and staff can better manage their communication with patients, resulting in increased efficiency and productivity.

“In the future I’m eager to have access to MEDENT through touch and tablets,” states Dr. Sheth, “whether it be the iPad, Google pad or the upcoming Windows 8 pads for touch.”