

At a Glance

Organization

Kachina Family Practice
Phoenix, Ariz.

- Family practice
- 4 physicians
- 350,000-patient service area
- 24,000 office visits per year

Solution Spotlight

- Practice Partner® Patient Records
- Practice Partner® Appointment Scheduler
- Practice Partner® Medical Billing

Critical Issues

- Better serve tech-savvy patient population
- Improve practice efficiency
- Increase accuracy and comprehensiveness of patient information
- Reduce space consumed by paper-based charts

Results

- Minimal interruption in physician productivity, with a return to full patient load in 6 weeks
- 30% reduction in time spent returning phone calls, refilling prescriptions, reviewing and ordering lab results
- Prescriptions handwriting errors have been eliminated and patient's confusion regarding medications has been dramatically reduced
- Chart room is 75% empty and practice is poised to achieve paperless office goal within first year of operation

Kachina Family Practice Successful Implementation Helps Practice Realize Benefits

Kachina Family Practice, a four-provider practice located in Phoenix, Ariz., began the transition to a paperless system in 2007. Several factors prompted the implementation of an electronic health record (EHR), including a technologically sophisticated patient population, the desire for improved efficiency and quality, and imminent government requirements.

Kachina's providers wanted the transition to the EHR (and ultimately to a paperless office) to be fast and virtually seamless, with little or no impact on patient volume and care quality. As such, rapid deployment was an absolute necessity and largely shaped their definition of success. After evaluating several vendors, the family practitioners selected the integrated Practice Partner EHR and practice management solution from McKesson based on the system's versatility and the ease with which it integrated into their workflow.

The practice succeeded in the rapid deployment goals, with minimal disruption to the practice and is realizing immediate gains in both efficiency and quality. They are projecting they will achieve the goal of a paperless office in less than a year.

Challenges

The semiconductor industry dominates the region served by Kachina, so the practice caters to a predominantly tech-

savvy patient base. As such, moving to an electronic system was an initiative the family practitioners knew they needed to undertake to best serve their patients. They also felt that an EHR based paperless office would help improve workflow efficiency and information accuracy. The practice also hoped to recover valuable office real estate, currently occupied by paper charts, for conversion to more productive uses, such as additional exam rooms and/or expanded work areas. At the same time, while keen on achieving productivity gains from the EHR, Kachina's practitioners pride themselves on their bedside manner and therefore did not want a computer to interfere with their relationship with patients.

Answers

Prior to implementation, Kachina enacted a plan that would help make rapid deployment possible. A scanning system was set up to begin converting patient information, and physicians began to familiarize themselves with utilizing the scanned charts. The practice also pre-registered patients in the system, saving time and preparing them for the transition. As part of their plan, Kachina brought on temporary personnel to assist with scanning—a wise decision since existing staff was already busy.

In August 2007, Kachina deployed Practice Partner® Patient Records,

Case Study

“Within the first two months of going live, I couldn’t imagine doing things the old way.”

Janet Mullins, MD
Kachina Family Practice

Practice Partner® Medical Billing and Practice Partner® Appointment Scheduler. With the system in place, existing patients arriving for appointments simply verify their information, while new patients fill out an intake form. From that point forward, all records are kept in the Practice Partner system.

To transition their existing paper charts into Practice Partner, the physicians entered an “abstract” of the patient’s medical history combined with a process of reviewing the history with the patient to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. By directly involving patients in the process, Kachina’s providers are being asked more health questions by their patients and have received a very positive response to the Practice Partner system.

The practice also invested its share of sweat equity with overtime work on the weekends for the first sixty days to help insure a smooth transition. In addition, the doctors worked extra hours daily and on weekends during the first several months of the deployment. The investment of time paid off. “Within the first two months of implementation, I couldn’t imagine doing things the old way,” said Janet Mullins, MD, one of the team leaders for the project.

Results

The speed at which implementation progressed was a critical factor for Kachina—the practice was determined

to minimize disruptions and down time. They succeeded. Just one week after go-live, physicians were seeing 90-95 percent of their normal patient load.

Due to their rapid and successful deployment, the providers at Kachina started to realize the benefits of using the Practice Partner system very quickly. For instance, because patient information is readily available through the EMR, physicians are able to see patients more rapidly and return phone calls faster. Additionally, providers are able to review and report lab results in less time and refill prescriptions more easily.

Since all prescriptions are written and managed electronically, handwriting errors have been eliminated and patient’s confusion regarding medications has been dramatically reduced. The Practice Partner system also prompts providers with preventative care reminders which have lead to improvements in quality of care at Kachina.

“Several implementation milestones were reached far more quickly than we had imagined was possible,” said Dr. Mullins. “As a result, both the practice and our patients have begun realizing the benefits of using the Practice Partner system, and we are well on our way to achieving our goal of being totally paperless in less than a year. Our chart room is already 75% empty!”

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