

Eye and Laser Center of Fort Collins

A Practice Management & EHR Success Story

The Problem: A Doctor Who Wants to Proactively Avoid Future Penalties

“Medicare has made it clear that it wants doctors to move into electronic health records (EHR) and I fully expect major insurance companies to follow suit,” says Andrew M. Norris, MD, a Fort Collins, Colorado, ophthalmologist who employs one part-time clinician and 8 staff members. About 40% of his patient base is Medicare patients, and that share is growing. “There is no doubt in my mind that doctors who aren’t on EHR will be penalized in the future. So the decision to implement EHR was more ‘when’ than ‘if,’” he says. The practice used Compulink’s practice management software and Optical Rx for about 5 years before really utilizing the EHR module. “We were just waiting for the right time to make the jump.”

The Solution: Seek out Stability & Customizability with Compulink’s Ophthalmology Advantage™

“After a bad experience with a practice management system that folded and left us in the lurch, I didn’t want to make that same mistake with EHR,” says Dr. Norris. “Compulink demonstrated its stability and responsiveness to users early on by making a strong commitment to certification, which has paid off in the company becoming one of the first CCHIT certified® 2011 Ambulatory EHR providers in ophthalmology.” In addition to Compulink’s solid reputation and large base of users in ophthalmology and optometry, “I was impressed by how specialized their EHR is. Depending on what kind of exam I’m doing, I can use the most relevant ophthalmic subspecialty template. Plus, with all the user customization options, I can further refine those templates to meet my own needs,” he says.

“Once we made the decision, Compulink helped us make a very smooth transition to EHR,” says Dr. Norris, who cut back his patient load by about 50% during the first two weeks. “Think of the time ‘lost’ as similar to attending a professional conference or taking a phaco course. It’s an important investment in your skills and the health of the practice.”

The Result: Save Money by Eliminating a Staff Position

Almost immediately after implementing EHR, the Eye and Laser Center of Fort Collins was able to eliminate a staff position. “We no longer needed an exam room scribe, so that saved about \$25,000 per year. The system essentially paid for itself,” Dr. Norris says. “In addition, we probably save 1 to 2 hours of staff time daily that used to be spent retrieving charts, filing papers, and hunting down lost files, as well as several hundred dollars worth of chart supplies each quarter.”

He also sees an impact on patient care. “The summary screen in Advantage/EHR™ tells me everything I need to know about the patient at a glance, much better than my paper record ever did. We do a better job now of making sure we have a current refraction, for example. I might see a glaucoma patient several times a year, primarily for pressure checks. We have customized the system to alert staff when the patient is due to be refracted or have some other test. It is so much better than relying on memory or flipping through a folder to see when the last tests were performed.”

Pearls for Success

“Don’t spend a lot of time scanning in old charts,” advises Dr. Norris. “For the first year, we pulled the paper chart to refer to, and then just entered the patient history and details of the new exam into the EHR system. Initially, this takes a little extra time because every exam is a ‘new’ patient for your EHR system, but the flip side is that we didn’t waste time or money entering data for patients who might not be seen again.”

SUCCESS

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