The Situation: Paper Cuts – Eliminating Paper Charting

Dr. James Atkison has been practicing at Sumter Asthma & Allergy Center in South Carolina since 1994. His wife, Maryanne, works alongside him as both an RN and the practice’s office manager.

The combination of being a sole practitioner and seeing well over 30 patients per day had begun to take a toll on the duo. At times, hours were being spent updating files and tracking charts, as well as taking extra precautions to avoid the unnecessary duplication of tests and blood work that may have been administered at another physician’s office.

Both Dr. Atkison and Maryanne were big proponents of implementing an EHR system to help with streamlining the processes in their office, but were concerned about budget. After spending a great deal of time preparing paper charts prior to patients seeing the doctor, physically pulling the files out of the cabinet, arranging the file the right way and then, after the doctor was done, “cleaning” the chart, punching holes and re-filing, the couple decided that in order to keep their practice on track, they needed to find an EHR system that would minimize their reliance on paper while increasing their ability to share important health information about their patients.

The Solution: Jumping in With Both Feet

Dr. Atkison and Maryanne were first introduced to AllergyEHR from Meditab in 2009 at an industry conference. After a year of doing their research looking at the product and the potential benefits it would bring to their practice, they decided to move forward.

They jumped into implementing AllergyEHR and were confident that Meditab would be there as a partner to “hold
Benefits experienced:

- Reduced office supply costs by approximately 25%
- Pharmacy calls decreased by 90%
- Patients are very happy with improved clinical reports and e-prescribing
- Submitting much cleaner claims and receiving payments within 30 days
- Received approximately $30,000 in incentives from Meaningful Use

their hand” through the conversion process. Rather than bringing parts of the system online over time (for instance the billing system, then the EHR), Dr. Atkison and Maryanne decided they wanted to start completely from scratch, with clean, 100% electronic records for all of their patients. When asked about whether or not they would recommend this method to their colleagues, Dr. Atkison noted, “While there is a lot of preparation and groundwork to be laid, as all data has to be entered into the system, we would definitely recommend taking the plunge and doing everything all at once.”

Customer service was a key component to the ease Dr. Atkison and Maryanne felt with their decision. They participated in multiple online demonstrations and webinars and also relied on the local Meditab IT team to assist them with any concerns. In addition, they found the software easy to use even with their limited computer knowledge and they felt the functionality of the allergy module was completely up-to-par with what they were already doing on paper. To boot, AllergyEHR was compatible with the Dragon voice-recognition technology that Dr. Atkison uses, so that made his clinical annotations a breeze.

“We were so pleased with the onsite training,” said Maryanne. “Once we got the hang of the system, we found it very easy to use. Honestly, if I can do it, anyone can do it.”

The Outcome: Reduced Costs, Greater Efficiency and Even Higher Quality of Care

Since going live with the AllergyEHR system in August 2011, Sumter Asthma & Allergy Center has been able to improve its efficiency and quality of care, while reducing costs, increasing payments on claims and receiving incentives from the Meaningful Use program.

When it comes to billing, AllergyEHR is so efficient that Maryanne spends about 25% less of her time billing, transmitting, and resolving billing problems. She no longer needs the assistance of the part-time biller she once worked with and has been able to submit much cleaner insurance claims, resulting in the receiving of payments within 30 days of submission.
Dr. Atkison reports that AllergyEHR has also expedited the prescription process, estimating that the staff is no longer “glued” to the phone and calls to the pharmacy have decreased by about 90%. Furthermore, the amount of calls from patients requesting staff to contact the pharmacy or write duplicates for misplaced prescriptions has decreased by 99%. Because AllergyEHR supports e-prescribing, patient medication compliance is seen in the Visit Note function and Dr. Atkison says, “I like having all the prior diagnoses right there in the note. It makes it easy to straighten out the problem list and I don’t have to re-write all the medicines that a patient is taking in the progress notes.”

Sumter Asthma & Allergy Center has also been able to receive incentives for Meaningful Use. In March 2012, their first year, they received $18,000 (pre-tax), as stated by the Medicare program, and in January 2013, they filed with Medicare and received $12,000 in March 2013.

Dr. Atkison and Maryanne note that their patients have been very pleased with the improved and more detailed clinical summaries that they now receive. “We even heard one patient in the waiting room say, ‘Wow, this is so much more in-depth than the ones I receive from my other doctors,’ and the other patients agreed.” The detailed reports are a result of the customizable templates, as well as all the time Dr. Atkison puts into his progress notes.

“Even if I’m at the office late at night, or on the weekend, I can call and someone is always there to answer my question. The 24-hour live chat feature is great.”

Dr. James Atkison
Allergist
Living in a small community with just two board-certified allergists, patients are spreading the word about how “thorough” Dr. Atkison is, by evidence of the clinical summary. Additionally, the staff is able to take a photo of the kids they see and the adult who brings them in, whether it’s the mother, father or another relative, so they can easily and visually keep track of who accompanied them.

The support from the Meditab team continues to be one of the reasons that Sumter Asthma & Allergy Center has had so much success in running their office with AllergyEHR. “Even if I’m at the office late at night, or on the weekend, I can call and someone is always there to answer my question. The 24-hour live chat feature is great and I’ve interacted with the nicest people who go above and beyond to make sure that I completely understand the answer I’m looking for.”

About Meditab
Established in 1998, Meditab Software Inc., developers of IMS (Intelligent Medical Software), offers clinical automation systems that maximize productivity, advance patient care, manage utilization, and reduce costs. Meditab develops and supports a multi-award-winning, multiscoped Electronic Health Records (EHR) system that combines clinical charting, e-prescribing, population management, decision support, practice analytics, document imaging and much more, on a single database platform. The company takes tremendous pride in providing comprehensive, user-friendly, and affordable solutions for each practice’s unique needs.

Time tested and proven, IMS generates tangible returns for medical practices of all sizes. Headquartered in Oakland, California, with offices across the globe, Meditab supports hundreds-of-thousands of users nationwide.