

Internal Medicine Specialists

Improving Treatment and Quality of Service

The Challenge

IMS, an ever-expanding gastroenterology practice, realized their current paper-based PM system was too expensive and lacked the advanced functionality they expected, resulting in a continued use of paper. IMS looked to switch and implement a comprehensive EHR solution that was affordable and would replace the need for transcription.

The eClinicalWorks Solution

eClinicalWorks' comprehensive EHR solution, with unified Practice Management, met the needs of IMS. It provides the functionality needed to eliminate transcription and streamline front-office and back-office workflows.

The Results

After rapidly adopting eClinicalWorks, Internal Medicine Specialists handled scheduling more easily, experienced smoother billing, and eliminated the need for paper and transcription services, saving the practice more than \$100,000 in a year. Using the system allowed all GI doctors to attest to Meaningful Use by the end of 2011.

Internal Medicine Specialists (IMS), an 11-provider practice located in eight locations throughout Central Florida, provides services in gastroenterology. Their goal is to provide care the way it once was — where patients are not a number but a person in need of help, information, and the best options laid before them. By implementing an affordable EHR, IMS anticipates an increase in staff focus on providing the best quality care.

EMR Selection

Overwhelmed with an influx of paper, Internal Medicine Specialists recognized a change needed to be made. With the healthcare industry gradually moving toward a standard of data capture to improve patient care, the logical solution was a comprehensive Electronic Health Record. Almost immediately, IMS began an extensive search for EHRs based on their practice's three top needs: scheduling, billing, and affordability.

IMS's search to replace its outdated paper-based PM system began in 2004. In addition to an EMR and the need to eliminate transcription service, the practice sought to:

- Increase control over patient files
- Improve patient tracking
- Manage labs, prescriptions, and notes more efficiently

In 2006, IMS implemented eClinicalWorks because it was:

- A comprehensive system, with scheduling, billing, and an internal medical record
- Affordable
- Recommended by physicians, locally and nationally

“eClinicalWorks' award-winning solution was chosen because as technology is advancing into the future, we wanted our EHR to grow and advance as well,” said Dr. Steven Brint. “We felt that eClinicalWorks provided the best opportunity to accomplish our goals.”

Implementation and data migration was rapid and smooth. Staff and physicians quickly learned to use eClinicalWorks, thanks to its intuitively designed layout and features. IMS staff particularly enjoyed the flexibility offered by the eClinicalWorks workflow process.

“Scheduling is becoming very smooth,” said Dr. Avanish Aggarwal. “Anyone can schedule, no matter where they are. Billing has become much smoother. Over the first few years, our billing revenue increased. eClinicalWorks made things easier for the nurses, who don’t have to go around the office looking for charts. We got rid of all our chart racks. We are able to use that space for operators to sit.”

“Billing was complicated before. Now, with eClinicalWorks, it’s as easy as surfing the internet.”

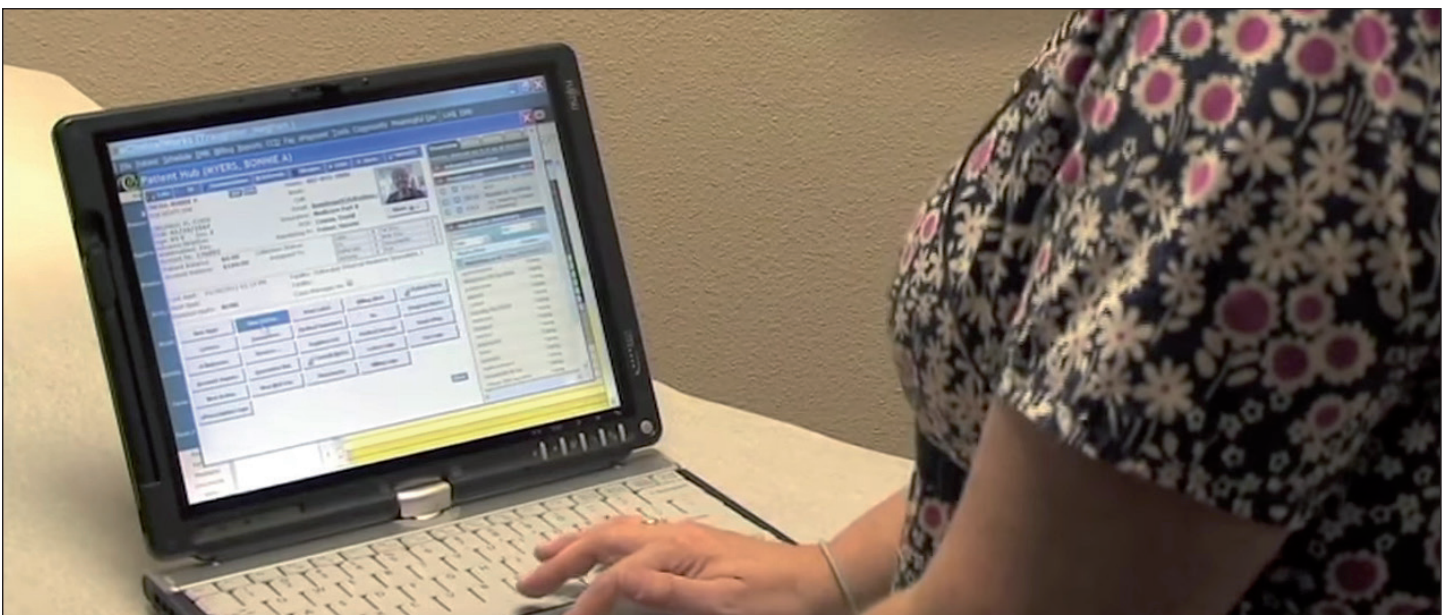
— Alicia, Billing Specialist

Implementation of a Paper-Dependent Practice:

The implementation process did pose some unique challenges. For example, the office staff needed to be trained on computers, as many had never used a mouse or laptop. The outdated paper-based PM system was based entirely on function buttons.

Luckily, the eClinicalWorks approach to implementing and training helped to make the transition smooth. Once staff were trained and comfortable using eClinicalWorks, office staff adapted quickly and were eager to learn more.

For the staff, eClinicalWorks has meant greater efficiency and time savings. “I was in charge of implementing eClinicalWorks for all of the providers and staff, most of whom have been here for a long time and were fearful of the loss of paper in hand,” said Billing Manager Lisa Burdue. “Once the staff realized everything was available instantly, it was a relief, and they became very accepting of the eClinicalWorks solution. Staff can’t imagine going back to paper — to not having patient information accessible immediately. Billing runs smoothly, claims go quickly, and anything can be found within the system. We try not to use paper anymore. eClinicalWorks has improved the way we treat our patients and the quality of care we provide.”



Switching from a paper system to eClinicalWorks EMR has saved the IMS staff time and effort. With the elimination of paper charts, the clinical staff can instantly view the patient’s record online, print the information out immediately, and respond to patient calls or questions for medication refills, lab results, and more within the hour, without wasting time searching for charts.

Almost seven years since the implementation of eClinicalWorks, IMS has increased the overall treatment and quality of service for patients. The EHR helps ensure that each patient receives the best care possible. Many patients want to be informed and involved in their care. With the elimination of paper charts, the clinical staff can instantly view the patient's record online, print the information out immediately, and respond to patient calls or questions for medication refills, lab results, and more within the hour, without wasting time searching for charts.

Messages are immediately routed to the appropriate staff, eliminating wait time and increasing patient satisfaction. The quick turnaround time on issues has had a positive impact for patients.

Clinical and Administrative Improvements:

Since implementing eClinicalWorks, Internal Medicine Specialists have seen a number of improvements:

- Elimination of transcription services
- Use of Patient Portal so patients can view/modify their information and communicate with the practice
- Faster and easier scheduling with the click of a mouse
- Front-office alerts for items that need attention before a patient checks in
- Labs go directly into the system, eliminating the need for faxed results to be scanned
- Charts are completed the same day as a visit, allowing for Notes to reach the patient's primary care physician the same day
- Care is less expensive and more efficient
- Chart racks were removed, and paper charts were scanned into eClinicalWorks
- Response time for patient questions is much faster, as there is no paper chart to locate; each patient can be found quickly using the Patient Lookup feature within eClinicalWorks
- Telephone encounters allow the practice to quickly and easily handle prescriptions and refills
- With eClinicalWorks in place, staff have the flexibility to work from home
- Cash flow has increased dramatically
- Clean claims are sent to insurers within 24 hours of a visit
- Accounts Receivable remain within a 90-day timeframe

"We implemented Patient Portal at the end of 2011 to allow for our GI doctors to meet the Meaningful Use standards," said Joseph Tackett, IT Administrator. "Patients like the Portal. They are able to ask for prescription refills, view previous charts and labs, and send questions. Back-end staff have fewer phone calls to answer, can refill prescriptions, and can answer questions and send messages through the Patient Portal. Patients can update demographic information. It's really made communication between patients and the practice much easier than playing phone tag."

Return on Investment Through the Use of Patient Portal

In addition to the \$100,000 Internal Medicine Specialists has saved annually by eliminating transcription costs, the practice saved \$132,000 per year (\$11,000 per month) through use of Patient Portal, which has reduced phone calls and demands on staff time through:

- Visit Summaries – eSummary
- Labs
- Remits
- Scheduling
- Reminders
- New appointments
- Simple inquiries

After adopting eClinicalWorks, Internal Medicine Specialists rapidly became accustomed to the comprehensive system, and achieved significant ROI during the first 12 months, averaging a reduction of \$1,133 per month in monthly supply costs, an overall savings of \$100,000 in annual transcription services. During the same time, IMS saved \$38,000 on processing results and visit summaries, and \$15,000 in messages and forms, while improving the quality of service for patients. These savings have helped IMS maintain their long-term goals of providing the practice with an affordable EHR and offering the best quality care to patients.

Return on Investment

The initial investment was for servers to host the system, Fujitsu tablets for the physicians, installation of wireless, cameras, card scanners, and regular scanners.

The practice ran on the original equipment for the first four years; then replaced the servers to transition to V9 to meet Meaningful Use.

The practice was able to eliminate its transcription costs, which were \$100,000 per year.

