

eClinicalWorks

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



PETALUMA HEALTH CENTER

DELIVERING QUALITY, INTEGRATED CARE
IN SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

improving healthcare together

The Challenge

A Federally Qualified Health Center in Northern California serving 31,000 patients annually — of whom 87% are below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level — needed a comprehensive healthcare IT partner with the Patient Engagement and Population Health tools necessary to ensure efficient workflows and deeper insight into the community's needs, both essential factors if they were to continue to deliver quality medicine and control costs.

The Solution

In collaboration with other health centers in the Redwood Community Health Coalition, Petaluma Health Center chose the eClinicalWorks EHR/PM solution. Providers were particularly impressed with the system's flexibility and customization and have invested time and effort to learn many key features, including flowsheets, Order Sets, eClinicalMobile, and Patient Engagement tools, including Kiosk, Patient Portal, and Messenger campaigns.

The Results

eClinicalWorks has given Petaluma's providers the tools to deliver high-quality clinical care across the full range of the center's offerings — in medical, dental, and behavioral health. Staff successfully undertook campaigns for hypertension control and hepatitis C testing, resulting in significant improvements in compliance, and receipt of a 2017 HIMSS Davies Community Health Award for excellence in healthcare IT implementation.

Petaluma Health Center

Making a Difference in Northern California

Excellence in Sonoma

Ask the staff at Petaluma Health Center why they are the first choice of some 31,000 patients each year, and you'll get a very simple answer: Quality.



Danielle Oryn, D.O.

"We are really dedicated to making sure that in our health center people get state-of-the-art care, the best care possible," said Dr. Danielle Oryn, D.O., Petaluma's Chief Medical Informatics Officer. "We track over 60 quality measures on a regular basis, and we have key measures that we focus on each year."

Petaluma handles about 150,000 patient visits annually. About 87% of patients are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, and many speak Spanish. So do better than half of Petaluma's providers, along with nearly a dozen other languages, the better to serve patients in one of the most diverse states in the nation.

Petaluma's patient-focused and data-driven approach has yielded impressive results, including recognition as a Patient-Centered Medical Home, Joint Commission certification in family medicine, and a 2017 HIMSS Davies Community Health Award for excellence in healthcare IT implementation.

If there's a common thread running through Petaluma's two sites, dozens of providers, and many successful programs as a Federally Qualified Health Center, it's their healthcare IT partner, eClinicalWorks.

“We really love the eClinicalWorks campaigns feature, eClinicalWorks Messenger. We have turned on a number of campaigns, and we have watched our patients get these messages and become more engaged and say ‘Thank you for reaching out to us.’”

— Danielle Oryn, D.O., Chief Medical Informatics Officer

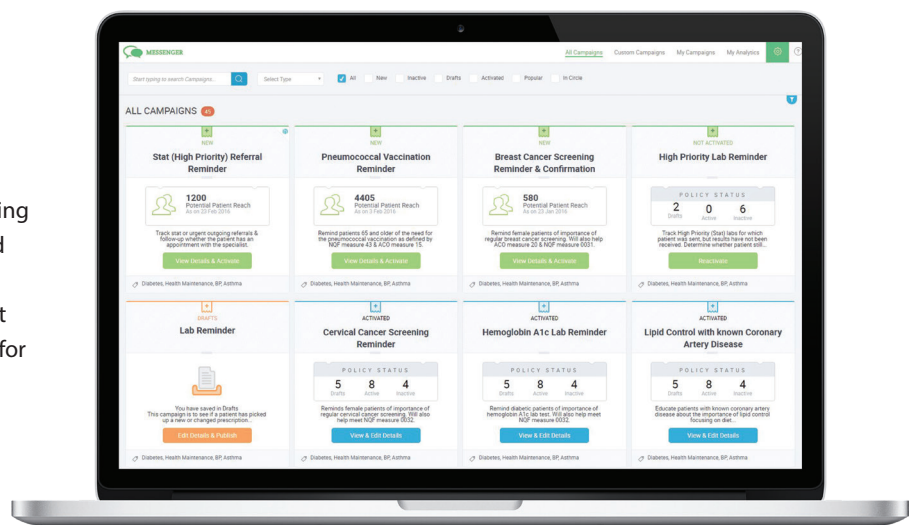
A Choice for Flexibility

“We worked with Redwood Community Health Coalition to select the EHR with our coalition of community health centers,” Dr. Oryn said. “What we really liked about eClinicalWorks was the flexibility to customize it to meet our needs.”

Petaluma staff have no doubt that eClinicalWorks was the right choice.

“With our hypertension templates and our Order Sets, it makes sure that we can keep providers up to date on what the most current clinical guidelines are,” said Lauren Williams, a physician’s assistant, who said the templates and orders improve workflows, reduce the risk of burnout, and improve clinical effectiveness. “Right now, I’m working with a couple of providers to make an HIV intake and follow-up template, so that makes sure patients check in about their risk factors and medication adherence and things like that. We’re also working on a persistent or chronic pain template and making sure we’re actually assessing whether opioid use is benefiting the patient.”

The staff at Petaluma Health Center have made effective use of eClinicalWorks Messenger, reminding patients of their appointments and conducting campaigns for better health engagement — to the point that many patients thank the staff for reaching out to them.



“We really love the eClinicalWorks campaigns, feature, eClinicalWorks Messenger,” Dr. Oryn added. “We have turned on a number of campaigns and we have watched our patients get these messages and become more engaged and say thank you for reaching out to us.”

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“It’s created this seamless system to really enhance our charts with photos that we did not have before,” Dr. Oryn said.

Measuring Results

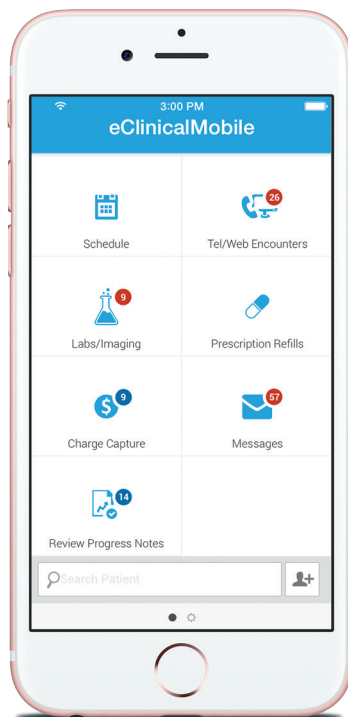
Effective Patient Engagement helps build awareness of the many services Petaluma has to offer and encourages patients to take full advantage of them.

“We’re really one-stop shopping,” said Amy Anderson, who is manager of nursing and navigation at Petaluma. “Anything from dental to prenatal care to nutrition services, chiropractic, and a really robust internal medicine, cradle to grave. If you only have to come to one place to get your medications, your blood draws, see your doctor, see the nutritionist, then it’s easier because you don’t have to plan multiple trips, you don’t have to take off multiple days from work. If you can get all of your services in one location, it can’t help but improve your health.”

Petaluma has had good success getting their patients to use the Patient Portal for appointments, lab results, and communication.

Medical assistant and trainer Heidi Garzon said about 70% of patients are using the Portal, and Petaluma’s providers make it as easy as possible.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center serving many thousands of patients each year, Petaluma Health Center’s providers need lots of options for documentation, messaging, and dictation. eClinicalMobile gives them the flexibility they need.





Investing in the time and training necessary to get patients using Patient Portal isn't easy, but it pays off. At Petaluma Health Center, Patient Portal plays a key role, giving patients an easy way to get the information they need — in English or in Spanish.

"We think as a care team about that patient," Dr. Oryn said. "Is this someone who would benefit from nutrition, or acupuncture, or nursing education?"

"I think it's really important to have all of those other providers from different specialties near me, so I can more easily talk with them," Williams said. "I'm not an expert in psychiatry, especially medications, and so we do have a couple of psychiatrists on staff, and I can just send an internal consult to them through telephone encounter and they can get back to me after having reviewed the patient's EHR and finding what next steps might be good for them in terms of medication, without them necessarily having to see the patient first."

Williams, who has worked with several other EHR systems, said eClinicalWorks is the best she has ever used.

To derive maximum value from the EHR, she recommends that practices have a clinical informatics specialist to lead their implementation and ongoing use of the system, as well as to customize it for the needs of their particular practice.

"Part of that campaign is explaining it to patients," Garzon said. "Brochures, videos, step by step how to create their account, send providers a message, schedule their appointments. Easy things. Rather than have patients read through instructions, we just have them watch a video. And we have the providers actually talk to them and let them know their results can be viewed on the Portal. Having the nurses and MAs encourage the patients to ask questions if they're having an issue."

Helpful Huddles

A key part of care at Petaluma are the staff huddles that take place at the start of each clinical shift. Providers and staff review the records of all patients who are scheduled to come in, looking for alerts regarding overdue tests or procedures so they can be sure that each patient's needs are met. Medical assistants are then able to complete much of the work before the physician or physician assistant meets with the patient.

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HIMSS Davies Recognition

In 2017, Petaluma Health Center received the HIMSS Davies Community Health Award in recognition of its work in successfully controlling hypertension and increasing screening of and treatment for hepatitis C.

“We know that heart attacks and strokes are a main cause of death in our community, and so we have focused on cardiovascular health for a long time,” said Dr. Oryn, “starting at the beginning of the patient cycle and following it all the way through, with an emphasis on prevention.”

Using the eClinicalWorks software, Petaluma created alerts that would notify providers whenever a patient’s blood pressure reading was outside the normal range. The health center’s protocol called for a second reading to be taken, and providers would then follow up as needed to determine what might be causing the high readings, and what course of treatment might be appropriate.

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“There are certain disease processes that if left untreated can really affect somebody’s health and well-being 10, 20, 30 years down the line,” Anderson said. “So, if you’re able to impact a change early on in the patient’s life, then you’re able to ensure that not only their quantity of life but the quality of life will be better. So, one of those things is hypertension.”

Dr. Oryn said Petaluma’s outreach efforts succeeded in moving their blood pressure control rate from 65% compliance to 75% in one year, and they have been able to maintain that.

Controlling Hepatitis C

“We know that hepatitis C is a problem in our community and among our patients,” Dr. Oryn said. “New medications are now available. We decided that we really needed to do what it takes to become treated.”

The data analytics in the eClinicalWorks EHR enabled Petaluma to identify which patients had hepatitis C and which were at risk but had not been screened, and then prioritize visits. Shared medical visits were set up to provide patient education more efficiently, and patients were then offered individual consultations with providers.

The difference was dramatic. In three years, Petaluma Health Center increased its hepatitis C screening rate from 10% to 60%, and successfully treated hundreds of patients.



Nutrition education and cooking classes can be key in supporting healthy lifestyles, which is why Petaluma Health Center makes those part of its integrated, holistic approach to health, alongside medical, dental, behavioral health, and even alternative therapies such as acupuncture and meditation.

acupuncture, and meditation. Organic foods from the area are sold at the health center once a week, further reinforcing patient education and outreach efforts.

“Our comprehensive model is really the future of healthcare and community health centers in general,” Williams said. “We all work a lot and take care of our families, and we don’t really have as much time as perhaps we need to address all of our healthcare maintenance, and even other things like dealing with pain or dealing with mental health issues, or insurance problems. And so, having kind of a one-stop shop is really important.”

“I think we will continue to innovate,” Dr. Oryn said. “I’m really excited about some of the work we’re doing in telehealth, and we’re really looking forward to utilizing eClinicalWorks more in the telehealth realm. I think our holistic model of care is the way most healthcare is going, and the technology is an important piece of that.” ■

Medicine’s Holistic Future

Successfully controlling hypertension and hepatitis C are significant achievements, but given the comprehensive nature of their work, the providers at Petaluma are confident that the future holds many similar successes. This, after all, is a health center that offers cooking classes, nutrition education,

WHEN MOTHER NATURE WAS AT HER WORST, THE PROVIDERS AT PETALUMA HEALTH CENTER BROUGHT OUT THEIR BEST

The wildfires that ravaged areas of Northern California in October 2017 took a heavy toll — killing 44, injuring nearly 200, scorching a quarter of a million acres, destroying 8,900 buildings, and causing more than \$9.4 billion in insured damages. And beyond the numbers was the incalculable psychological toll on residents of six counties.

In the midst of so much loss, medical providers do what they do best — act upon their basic instincts as healers and caregivers.

“We really opened our doors to our community,” said Amy Anderson, who manages a staff of 24 nurses at Petaluma Health Center. “The largest health center in our county was actually in the

burn zone, and people evacuated with minutes to spare, not bringing their medications. So, a lot of what we did was to link to other patients’ charts to verify medications. And then we were able to work with pharmacies to get people the prescriptions they need for life-sustaining medications.”

“We were seeing a lot of patients with coughs and asthma,” added Erika Raygoza, a medical assistant and trainer at Petaluma. “And a lot of patients were just depressed, anxious about what had happened. Even we were feeling that.”

As the fires spread, it was quickly apparent that medical providers throughout the region would have to pull together. Petaluma increased its hours to welcome many patients who regularly would receive their care elsewhere, thus helping to relieve the burden on area emergency services and hospital ERs. And the health center deployed mobile vans to provide services to residents in shelters.

“We had a lot of respiratory issues,” Anderson said. “And we had a lot of people who would just walk in and would need a place to sit. We were really a haven and a safe space for the community.”

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“We have one provider who loves using eClinicalTouch,” said Heidi Garzon, another Petaluma medical assistant and trainer. “During the fires, we had a lot of patients who came in for refills, because one of the other clinics was affected. There was a line of people who just needed their medications refilled, so this provider, using the iPad, walked out to the waiting room and using eClinicalTouch refilled their medications.”

“All of the health centers in this region participated in really amazing ways in the fire recovery,” said Dr. Danielle Oryn, Petaluma’s chief medical informatics officer. “Health centers had clinicians in the shelters on day one, taking care of patients who evacuated from group homes, medical facilities, and their own homes. We sent behavioral health staff to shelters and opened our doors to anyone in the community who needed care.”

Dr. Oryn notes that on the first day of their response to the natural disaster, the staff at Petaluma used the Messenger campaign feature in eClinicalWorks to notify patients that they were open.

“It was vital that we got the word out saying we were ready to provide urgent care to anyone in the community, whether we were their usual place or not,” she said. “And because we were open and we had a lot of people we didn’t know coming in for care here, we didn’t always know their medical history or medications. We were able to access primary care records for patients who came from other facilities. We were able to see medication histories using the external prescription history feature, even if they came from private systems. I had one male patient who needed a critical medication. And I found out his provider had indeed received the prescription, and I was able to give him the very good news that it was already done.” ■

THE ROLE OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS WHEN DISASTER COMES

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the fallibility of paper medical records and the need to move towards a modernized system. Thousands of patient medical files were lost, increasing the recovery time and difficulty for hospitals to manage patients. At that time, approximately 25% of physicians in the United States were using EHR/EMRs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), today 86.9% of physicians in the U.S. use either an EHR or EMR system. Approximately 77.9% of those systems are certified, meaning the system meets criteria defined by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This is a drastic improvement from 2005 but reflects only those using EHR/EMRs and does not consider access to those records through either health information exchanges or backup generators.

The healthcare response to recent catastrophic storms and wildfires is an improvement in comparison to the response to Hurricane Katrina, but there is still a long way to go. Not only does this question of increased information sharing and access need to be addressed, but we still do not have full EHR/EMR participation from healthcare providers. In fact, some of the more vulnerable states have the lowest rates of EHR/EMR participation, including Louisiana and New Jersey, two states affected by some of the most devastating hurricanes in recent U.S. history. Healthcare providers are asking the healthcare sector to move toward modern technological infrastructure and to increase funding for the development of secure health information exchanges.

SOURCE: The University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security.
<http://www.mdchhs.com/the-role-of-electronic-health-records-when-disaster-comes/>