

eClinicalWorks

CASE STUDY



WOMEN'S CARE FLORIDA

HOW HEALOW MOM HELPS A PRACTICE
AND ITS PREGNANT PATIENTS

improving healthcare together

The Challenge

A large, well-established OB/GYN practice serving Tampa, Orlando, and surrounding areas in Central Florida was looking for a way to enhance Patient Engagement by giving expectant mothers additional tools to track their pregnancies, make appointments, obtain health education materials, and communicate with their doctors.

The Solution

Women's Care Florida already had a strong relationship with eClinicalWorks and had successfully integrated the healow base app into their practice. They embraced the healow Mom app as well, working with their eClinicalWorks trainer to ensure staff and patients understood its capabilities and knew how to use it.

The Results

With 52 locations throughout Central Florida, Women's Care Florida has successfully increased Patient Engagement with healow. An estimated 40,000 patients use the healow base app, and the numbers of patients using healow Mom is growing rapidly. Tech-savvy millennials, who account for many of the practice's patients, are using the healow apps to stay better informed and take charge of their health throughout their pregnancies.

Women's Care Florida: Expecting Great Results

A Trendsetter in Central Florida



Peter Alvarez, MD

Dr. Peter Alvarez is confident that Women's Care Florida is already a leader in providing OB/GYN services throughout Central Florida. After all, the numbers alone tell a powerful story: Founded in 1998, Women's Care Florida has experienced

tremendous growth in the less than 20 years of its existence, and now has 200 providers caring for 350,000 patients annually, with 67 out-patient locations in the state.

With more than 13,000 babies delivered each year, and some 450,000 office visits, Women's Care is obviously doing a lot right.

But in addition to practicing medicine and serving on the practice's board of directors, Dr. Alvarez is also chairman of the practice's Electronic Health Records committee. It is that last role that provides him with a particular perspective and goal.

"We want to be trendsetters," Dr. Alvarez said. "We want to be on the front lines of technology, and setting the front lines of care in women's health throughout the state, and hopefully even nationally. Technology is a very integral component with Women's Care Florida, not just enabling us to communicate with our patients and deliver our quality of care to our patients, but just being able to communicate with our offices."

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With more than 50 offices throughout the state, and working with other outpatient facilities and hospitals, Women’s Care has an ongoing need to remain in close communication with providers, specialists, subspecialists, and patients.

Referrals, Dr. Alvarez noted, are a very important part of Women’s Care Florida.

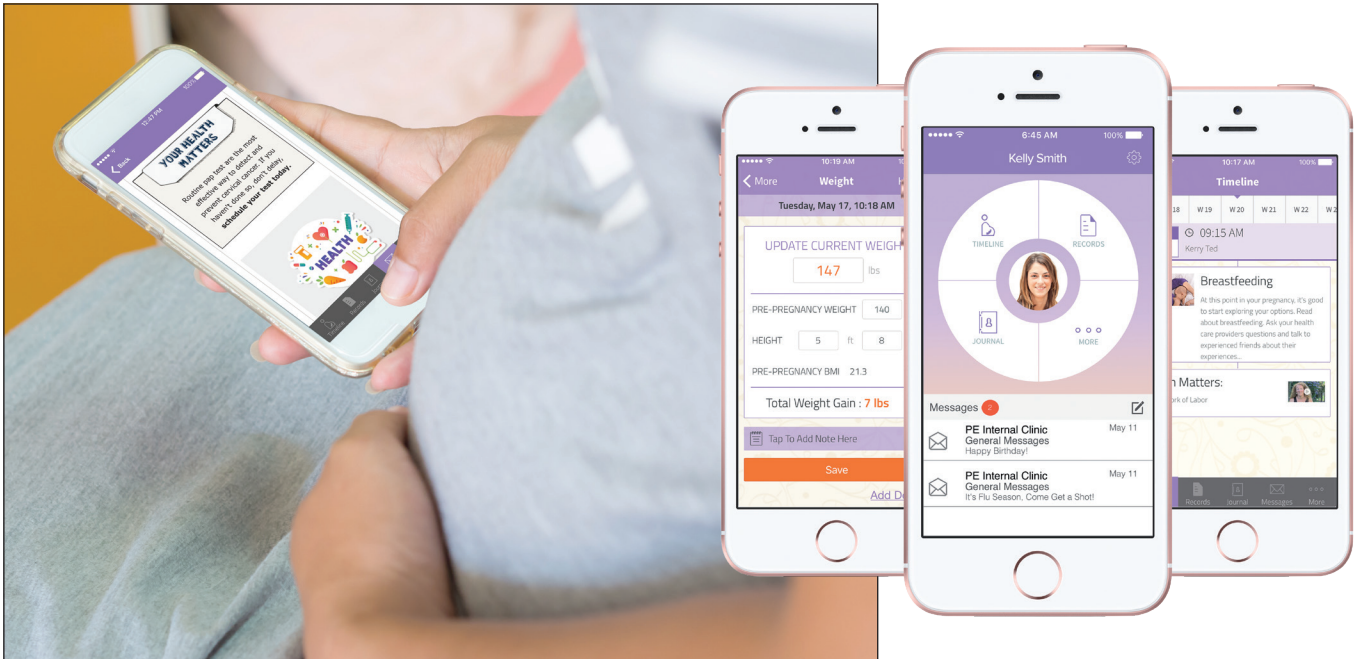
In the context of such a large, diverse, and important practice, it might seem counterintuitive to suggest that a simple health app could make much of an impact. But that is exactly what has happened with the Women’s Care Florida and the healow family of apps.

“They Have Their Little Phones!”

Kay Dunaway, who has been Dr. Alvarez’s primary nurse for the last 13 years, describes her job as making sure “everything runs smoothly here.” And that includes keeping an eye on the progress that patients and physicians are making with healow apps for better Patient Engagement. She said there is no doubt that patients love the technology that healow, eClinicalWorks, and Women’s Care Florida makes available to them.

“They can follow their pregnancy,” Dunaway said. “They’re interested in seeing the growth of the baby. They can communicate with the office. They can communicate with the physician, and get their lab results. It just provides more than what’s going on with a regular app, or that they might get by calling the office. Plus, they’re able to see the app at home on their own time.”

The idea of making health information more accessible while saving the time that a practice’s staff might otherwise have to



Thousands of patients at Women's Care Florida have downloaded the healow Mom app to take control of their pregnancies.

spend answering phones and looking up records is a common one throughout healthcare today. But the healow Mom app, Dunaway said, is simply ahead of the field.

"For one, patients can monitor their blood sugars," she said. "They can monitor their blood pressures at home, and they can send that information to their physicians while they're at home. So that's a big help for us. And if they forget their blood sugars at home, they have their little phones! They don't forget their phones. So, they can just pull it up, and we can get that information from them."

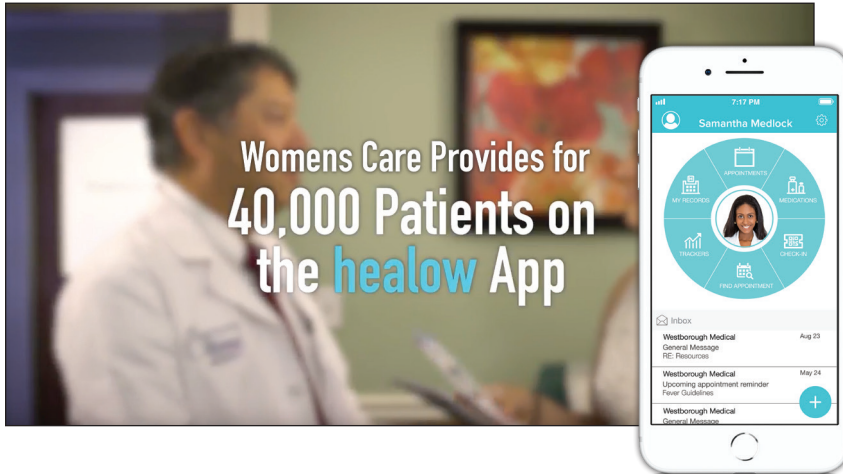
"Yes, the healow app is a very important part in one aspect of our Patient Engagement tools," Dr. Alvarez said. "We know of at least 40,000 patients who are on the healow app. The healow Mom app is more recent, out for about a year, so the numbers are still growing on that."

Dr. Alvarez said the practice expected patients would like the app, given that most are in their 20s and 30s and very comfortable with technology.

"But we now know that they expect it," Dr. Alvarez said. "They are millennial patients and expect something like this. There are many maternity apps out there that they can download. However, this one is unique to the practice, ties into their chart, and they can stay in contact with the practice because of it, so it has become a very popular thing among our patients."

How Engagement Helps the Practice

Sheila Gallagher, the clinical manager of Women's Care's Lakeland office, sees firsthand the difference that healow apps make in the daily clinical workflows of the office.



“The healow Mom app helps patients participate in their care,” Gallagher said. “It helps them engage, input information that they can share with the provider. They love it. Patients are very tech-savvy these days. I don’t know anybody who doesn’t have a phone on them, and it gives them the ability to input information and have it constantly available to update.”

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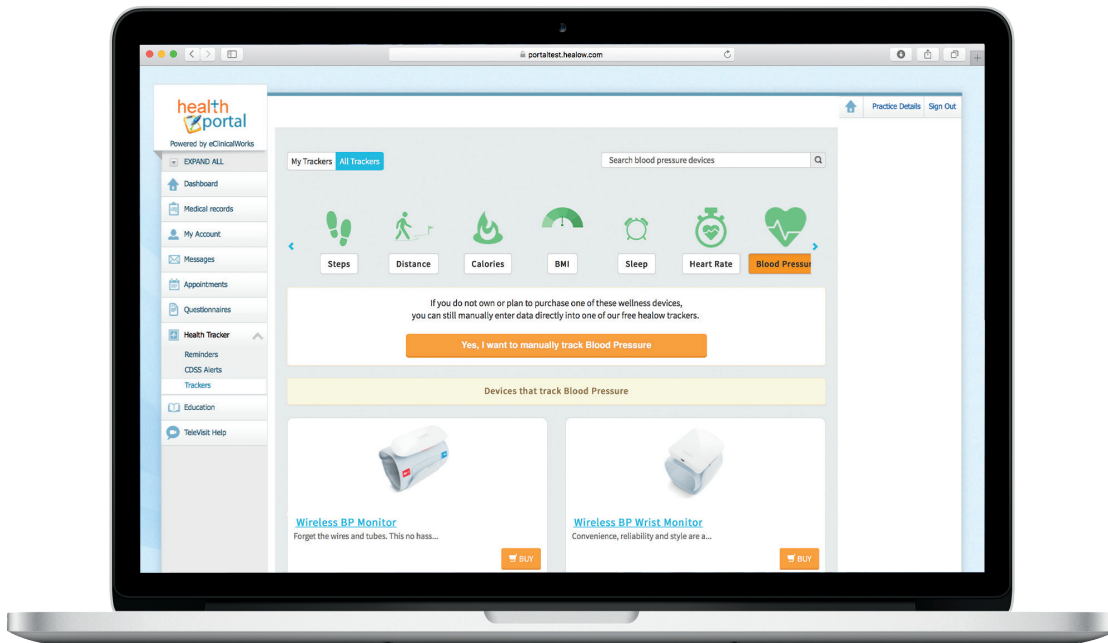
app comes from and is endorsed by the provider, patients trust the information it contains, and prefer it over, say, a broader Google search, which will turn up a great deal of information, but doesn’t ensure the accuracy or the information or organize it in ways that patients can use.

“They have absolutely been receptive,” Gallagher said. “It’s consistently providing them with information, and they’re just used to that technology.

“Being able to look at the app, it would tell me week to week what was going on with my pregnancy,” said Katerine Leavens, a new mom to baby Hunter. “Other apps wouldn’t do that. I had friends who were at the same timeframe of their pregnancies as I was, and they wouldn’t have the app and I would. I thought mine was a lot more knowledgeable than some of the other apps that are out there.”

Real-time Information, Better Care

“I really do believe that the app has enhanced the care,” Gallagher said, noting that the app engages patients in two ways — with general, background information that is credible and well organized, as well as with more specific measures important to monitoring one’s health and alerting patients and their doctors to potential problems.



The Patient Portal provides patients and providers alike the means to share information, messages, lab results, and health education.

“It gives them videos, information, different items that they can search while they’re at home,” Gallagher said. “And it provides them with information without even having to be in touch with the office during office hours.”

But for immediate health concerns, she added, the most important aspects of the healow Mom app are the blood pressure and blood sugar log, which ensure that data is available to both patients and their healthcare providers at all times.

“It’s real-time information, and being able to upload that into the system, the medical record,” she said. “And just not having to have someone go back and try to remember ‘What was it at 6 o’clock that night?’ Instead, they are able to upload that information into their phone, and then we can import that into the system.”

“For example,” Dr. Alvarez said, “we have a lot of patients who have gestational diabetes, and they have to take a log of their blood sugars much more precisely than a nonpregnant person. And they have to bring that log into us each time they visit so that we can see where they are on their blood sugar and make very, very fine adjustments. Many times, the patients would forget that. They would leave it at home, they would say their dog ate it, whatever you could come up with.”

But, Dr. Alvarez added, echoing Dunaway, “they always brought their phone. And I can either look at it right from their phone, or I

can just look at it from my eClinicalWorks EMR in that healow app integration that it has, and I can bring up their blood sugar logs. And the same goes for blood pressure. So that right there is an immediate benefit — clinically for the physician, and also in terms of ease of use for the patient.”

Building Long-Term Ties With Families

The staff at Women’s Care Florida appreciate the difference that the healow apps have made for their workflows. Many common

questions that might previously have meant a phone call to the office can now be answered by patients on their own, using the app.

“It’s just a better way of communicating with the patients,” Dunaway said. “Fewer phone calls is better because we can take care of the patients here in the office. And it’s better for the patients at home, too, because they’re getting answers a lot quicker. It’s saving them time calling and waiting for a reply.”

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And it is that commitment to creating a medical practice that welcomes and cares for families over the long term that is of greatest value.

“I’ve been a patient here since January,” Leavens said. “I’ve had a lot of family members who have been patients here for several years, and I decided to come here because I saw how happy they were with their care. It was the best option for me.

Leavens, who had gestational diabetes, said the healow Mom app definitely helped reduce her anxiety as her pregnancy progressed.

“There’s always something new at the office,” she said, “and I could always see what was going on, keep in touch with my doctor at all times. I could always write him a message.”

Gallagher explains how that level of confidence and trust pays off — in long-term relationships between patients and doctors, and a holistic

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approach to care that keeps a close eye on every aspect of the expectant mother's health.

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Working Closely With eClinicalWorks

Dr. Alvarez said that Women's Care has been a champion of the healow Mom app since it first came out, and worked closely with eClinicalWorks on how best to present the app to patients and educate them — as well as the practice's many staff — in its use.

“You know, pregnancy is a very emotional time,” Dr. Alvarez said. “It's a very taxing time on women's nerves as well as on their bodies. It's an emotionally and physically taxing moment in their life. The more information they have, the less anxiety they have.”

And while Women's Care closes its offices at 5 p.m. each day, their many patients now have an additional resource available to them 24/7.

“It was a learning experience both with eCW and with Women's Care Florida that was a synergistic growth,” he said. “And because of some of the ideas that we came up with, and with some of the assistance on their side, we've come up with a very, very robust program on how we've promoted the app here in our office. That's been very successful.”

So much so, that Gallagher sees Women's Care Florida using the apps as a primary method of sharing patient information and data among subspecialists and offices as the practice continues to grow.

“As it is we have all of the technology here,” Gallagher said. “In the last 20 years, what I've seen in going from paper charts to this kind of electronic charting, it's been absolutely awesome. Patients now have the access they need to go online and fill out their own information even before they come to the office. I don't know how much better it can get!”

Preparing for an Exciting Future

But that question — how much better it can get — is one that Dr. Alvarez continues to ponder, particularly in light of experience such as Hurricane Irma, which struck Florida in September 2017.

“This office was down for two days without electricity or power,” Dr. Alvarez said, “And yet, the patients, I think, found a little bit of comfort in knowing that they could look at the app, they could see their sonogram, they could see where they were week by week, their due date, their expectations.”

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Without that connection, he said, patients would have been completely disconnected from the office, and providers, too, would have been left wondering how best to get in touch with their patients.

“And that is just a microcosm,” Dr. Alvarez said. “That’s just one example of the benefits. And eClinicalWorks has taken some of our ideas and pushed them out to other clients. So, we’re very thankful for eClinicalWorks working together with us and being able to work with us. We’re very thankful that they listened to us, to our ideas about how to get their information to pregnant patients.”

With a strong and growing practice, and the confidence that comes with having excellence documentation and strong Patient Engagement, Dr. Alvarez is looking for ways to bring the clinical excellence he has seen at Women’s Care Florida to a bigger stage.

“Women’s Care Florida is continuing to grow,” he said. “Acquiring practices. Growth within and outside our state. We have learned with this maternity app experience that eClinicalWorks wants to work with us, is willing to listen to what we have to say in promoting and expanding eClinicalWorks into women’s health. We’re very thankful that we have their ear. And, therefore, we know that we’re going to have a very close relationship as we continue to grow.” ■