

CASE STUDY

Total Health and Wellness Center Digs Out of Paper Avalanche with RAPID EMR Software System

BACKGROUND

Treating the residual effects of automobile and industrial accidents, sports injuries and the aches and strains of everyday living historically means paperwork for chiropractors, with the quality of the note-taking and reporting often making the difference between an effective course of treatment and the denial of benefits. One estimate holds that as much as 40 percent of the time spent in a health care practice is now devoted to generating paperwork.

Dr. Doug Arvanitis was well aware of the need to optimize back office processes when he opened his practice in 1997. One of his first moves in opening the Tampa Bay practice was to acquire a workflow system that would minimize manual input during and after patient encounters or following therapy sessions, as well as manage patient and payment provider billing.

PROBLEM

There was still lot of handwork however, and he often found himself spending many hours assembling notes and completing reports at home after a long day at the office. In mid-2003, however, he cut this manual activity to a minimum with the acquisition of RAPID EMR, an electronic medical records solution developed by New Times Medical, LLC, now the Electronic Medical Records division of ACOM Solutions, Inc.

What bothered Dr. Arvanitis as much as the actual overtime work, he says, was that it robbed him and his family of precious time together. And given that Dr. Arvanitis looks at his profession as a great growth opportunity, the demands on his time could only get worse as his chain of practices continues to grow. Meanwhile, pressures from attorneys and insurance adjusters involved in personal injury cases for faster delivery of documentation also continued to increase.

A graduate of Ohio State University and Life Chiropractic College, Dr. Arvanitis founded Total Health and Wellness Centers in 2000 with partner Ray Campos, a fitness center operator and consultant. The practice/company currently consists of three offices, all located in fitness centers in the Tampa-Clearwater area. Staff consists of three chiropractors, a neurosurgeon, five licensed massage therapists, two marketing persons and a certified therapist who focuses on patient rehabilitation.

The practice is broad-based, encompassing everything from injuries sustained by professional athletes, to personal injury

victims and workers compensation cases, to walk-in patients with backaches. Total Health and Wellness Centers (THWC) is the team chiropractor for The Tampa Bay Storm arena football team and designee for the same position with the Tampa Bay Force, an expansion team planned for the Women's Professional Football League. Additionally, Dr. Arvanitis is the personal chiropractor for several major league baseball players and professional football players as well as for three professional boxing titleholders.

SOLUTION

RAPID EMR and a companion diagnostic tool called Spine Report are complementary software solutions that were designed around the specific needs of the chiropractic community. The software resides both on desktop and tablet computers, which the chiropractors use during examinations for streamlining their patient visits, making notes and completing reports. The tablet PCs replace the typical procedures in which notes from exams and office visits are hand-written on preprinted daily note forms, with the information later transferred manually to an electronic template in the office computer system. A data network connects the three THWC offices with the central computing platform.

Before the acquisition of RAPID EMR, virtually all activities involved a two or three stage process in which professional, therapy and clerical staffs participated. Professionals and therapists recorded their exams, analyses and treatments on daily note forms created for their specific phases of the activity. The front office entered the charges indicated and forwarded the necessary documents to insurance companies and other concerned parties. Reports, of course, were another story, since they involved not only the diagnostics and therapeutic facts of the case but also the practitioner's expert opinion and prognosis. Preparing reports could take hours of reading, analyzing and dictating as many as 20 pages of text.

When Dr. Arvanitis saw RAPID EMR, he had already evaluated several solutions for cutting the back office and professional paperwork load. In one case, the solution not only lacked the flexibility he desired, but was virtually cost prohibitive: the basic system required an investment of more than \$20,000.

"The chief problem," he says, "is that it required us to do things in only one way, to fit our processes into a rigid structure that the developers had devised. When we found RAPID EMR, we discovered the flexibility we were looking for



at an extremely affordable price – about 20 percent of the cost of the system that we had rejected.”

RAPID EMR is a generic record-keeping and report writer solution for chiropractors and medical doctors involved with personal injury cases. Its unique design is based on "Intelligent Fields" technology, with every feature designed around input from actively practicing chiropractors. Since it can reside on a tablet PC as well as on a general-purpose desktop computer, the doctors can carry it with them as they move from room to room, patient to patient.

The system is extremely flexible and almost infinitely extensible by its user, enabling the reports to reflect the distinct language and nomenclature of the individual doctor; versus the “canned” reports available with many systems. Now in daily use by a growing body of professionals, the software remains in development, evolving to reflect the best practices in the industry.

RAPID EMR provides its users with a growing array of interactive screens, now numbering nearly 20. From the main program screen the practitioner can select from the following, among others: Patient Information, Chief Complaints, Range of Motion, Neurology Exam, Orthopedic Exam, Impairment Rating, Narrative Report, Outcome Assessment Reports and pictorial “Helper” screens for the entire body, the muscles, the spine, acupuncture, auriculotherapy (3 screens), and a genealogical tree. It also features a document filing system for virtually automatic filing of all documents generated.

Each of the screens is meticulously detailed with check-off boxes for all of the diagnostic/treatment elements associated with the screen, and a Microsoft Word-based report generator that operates independently of RAPID EMR enables creation of customized reports that reflect the individual doctor’s unique style and personality.

“Our previous methodology was very simple,” says Dr. Arvanitis, “but it was labor intensive and slow, and many of the insurance companies did not like the style and lack of consistency in the notes. The front office still generates the billing documents, but treatments and examinations are recorded and reported using RAPID EMR, which can almost instantly generate well-organized professional documents that are consistent throughout our offices.”

IMPLEMENTATION

Installation of the RAPID EMR system was performed in an afternoon by the developers. Training of the doctors followed,

with its graphically oriented presentation and checklist format making the system’s use virtually intuitive.

“The same processes have to be observed and our associated attorneys and insurance companies still require the same kinds of notes and reports, but now they can have them within a few minutes, where previously they might have waited for days or weeks. We save a significant amount of time on filing, copying files for these associates, and we have experienced a stark decline in the number of denial letters from insurance firms. All of these factors help improve the functioning and profitability of the practice.”

SUCCESS!

RAPID EMR has impacted Dr. Arvanitis’ personal life dramatically, he says, since he no longer has to take his computer and files home with him and spends his evenings doing office work.

“I can complete notes within seconds and easily finish my paperwork by the time the last patient walks out the door,” Dr. Arvanitis says. “For me, having an extra two or three hours to spend with my wife and two boys is priceless.”

Quantifying the savings is highly individual, he says, but even so, it is easy to identify the efficiencies that have been introduced internally as well as those newly made available to the attorneys and insurance companies that the doctors deal with. Everything in the offices runs more smoothly, he says, and there is little redundancy remaining in the practice workflow.

RAPID EMR is fully deployed in THWC’s three offices, and the system will be instrumental in expanding the practice with more offices in the future, Dr. Arvanitis says.

“It was affordable to purchase and we have been very pleased with the service and support we’ve received,” he says. “It saves time, headaches and energy and overall makes the office more streamlined and efficient. The consistency and continuity of the notes and reports generated with RAPID EMR, along with the ability to network all of our offices, makes billing and collections much easier for our office manager.”

When purchasing diagnostic and reporting software, he says, it is important to select a system that is right for your own practice and applications as well as cost-effective. It should be easy to use, he says, because “...otherwise, you just won’t use it”.

“RAPID EMR is all of this and more. My reports and notes say what I want them to say, not what they would be forced to say by other software systems.”

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