



North Carolina Orthopaedic Clinic A NextGen Case Study

EMR the Center of New Orthopedic Practice Design

Overview

Practice

North Carolina Orthopaedic Clinic,
Durham, North Carolina

<http://www.ncorthoclinic.com>

Practice Profile

A new orthopedic practice consisting of five board-certified physicians treating musculoskeletal problems caused by injury, disease, aging, or disuse.

Business Problem

Disorganization of paper-based medical charts leading to inefficiencies and unnecessary costs and delays.

Solution

Implemented NextGen EMR and leveraged the capabilities to create a highly successful referral business.

Product Distinctions

- ▶ Knowledge Base Model for Orthopedics
- ▶ PACS interfacing
- ▶ Image management
- ▶ Patient Education

Benefits

- ▶ Complete transcription savings
- ▶ Stronger documentation and coding
- ▶ Automatic lab order entry
- ▶ Remote access

In 2002, Duke University wanted to open a new orthopedic clinic just off their campus in Durham, North Carolina, to serve a dual purpose. They wanted an orthopedic resource for Duke's Durham Regional Hospital and they wanted to serve the needs of local residents who might want the quality of university-associated care and yet prefer to avoid the difficulties associated with navigating a large, busy, parking-restrictive campus.

University officials also wanted a cutting-edge facility that was progressively designed, physically and organizationally, for optimal efficiency, productivity, and patient care. They knew it was critically important to incorporate all of the best and latest in information technology to help them achieve their goals.

Central to their aims for organizational efficiency and the ultimate in patient care, they realized, would be the installation of an electronic medical record system that would keep the focus of the staff on care and business priorities rather than on wasteful hours of chart-hunting, transcribing, coding by hand, error-prone data entry, relentless prescription and pharmacy calls, and other repetitious processes and tasks that could and should be automated.

Though entrenched with a practice management system for many years, Duke had not fully delved yet into the medical records arena with their associated practices. This venture would serve as a test site of sorts before more fully integrating medical record capabilities in their other facilities.



Joe T. Minchew, MD,
specializes in disorders
and surgery of the spine
at NCOC and was an
early proponent of using
an EMR in the practice.

The Search Begins

Officials began a three-pronged approach. They initiated their search for an EMR by investigating many of the leading systems. They also began looking for a qualified practice manager and started developing the plan for a brand-new building to house the orthopedic facility, to be named North Carolina Orthopaedic Clinic (NCOC).

While narrowing their search for an EMR, they were fortunate to find the perfect practice manager for what they were trying to accomplish. John Bonini, with 16 years' experience managing an orthopedic facility in New York, had also successfully implemented an EMR system there with very impressive results. Bonini joined them in 2003.

Meanwhile, Duke Health Technologies and the physicians who would compose the practice had by that time narrowed the field of potential systems to two. However, Bonini's hiring and his glowing endorsement of the system he had been using clearly tilted the edge in one system's favor, as Bonini suggested it would be perfect for the new practice. That system was NextGen EMR from NextGen Healthcare Information Systems.

"I knew that when it came to orthopedic content and features the practice would require, there was no

competition. NextGen EMR was light years ahead." Bonini says. "Were we to go with one of the other systems, it might have taken three years to create the proper templates that NextGen already supplied right out of the box." Going live on a system without those templates would have been much more difficult, he explained.

NextGen offers an Orthopedic Knowledge Base Model with their EMR, which is a set of dozens of orthopedic-specific templates specifically written by orthopedists for use in the orthopedic workflow. The templates, which can easily be modified to suit individual needs or preferences, include all of the typical procedures, tests, exams, and routines an orthopedist might need for documentation and automatic coding.

Bonini also reminded the group of NextGen EMR's other advanced features that differentiated the system from others. Those features were the referral management, the interface capability with PACS, the unique patient tracking system, the image management, and the extensive connectivity with labs, hospitals, and pharmacies.

Bonini's confidence in NextGen cemented the decision. The practice selected NextGen EMR.



In Flux

As the new building would take time to construct, it was decided to open the new practice in a temporary location, incorporate the EMR when they were under way and established, and then move into the new facility with the new EMR in place and the practice running at peak effectiveness.

The five-physician practice opened in the fall of 2003 in their temporary space (a mere 6,000 sq. ft.) and was already anxious to implement the EMR and move into their permanent home (which would measure 18,000 sq. ft.). Almost immediately, due to space constraints and a lack of technology, the practice could barely handle the business volume, with charts everywhere, difficulty finding appropriate materials, and an inability to get charts populated with updates and additions.

A Decision Made

The practice implemented the EMR in the temporary facility in the spring of 2004, and on Bonini's advice, it was completed all at once. He knew that a more piecemeal, or "modular," approach with other systems had been a failure in many practices he was familiar with. He felt strongly that, for a practice to be successful with an EMR, it was imperative that the physicians and staff learn and have access

to everything at once, while they were making the change and could incorporate all of the beneficial features directly into their routine. This way, all of the benefits could be seen immediately, maximizing user acceptance, appreciation, and potential for the system, as well as affording the best and fastest possible return on the investment.

With the new system selected and its potential understood, the new building's design could be further established. No chart storage rooms would be needed, maximizing the available space for two extra, revenue-generating exam rooms. No patient tracking system would have to be purchased and built throughout the facility (saving \$35,000), as NextGen EMR easily handled that responsibility with a quick glance at its screen. Staff space could be estimated because use of the EMR made staffing predictable and smaller in several areas.

Let the Benefits Begin

At this point, the new building is nearing completion and Bonini is seeing the many benefits of a completely paperless facility, thanks to the EMR. Among the benefits:

"With one of the other systems, it might have taken three years to create the proper templates that NextGen already supplied right out of the box."

John Bonini
Practice Manager



" [The EMR] is fostering a terrific relationship with primary care providers, making our practice the referral of choice."

John Bonini
Practice Manager

- ▶ Within a few months of the EMR implementation the practice had completely eliminated transcription costs, saving \$10,500 a month, or \$126,000 annually.
- ▶ Just six months after going live they received 100% full compliance on a JCAHO chart audit. As a university affiliate, they knew audits were critical, but they felt confident in this regard because every JCAHO rule was addressed within NextGen's templates. Items such as patient education, pain scores and descriptors, treatment plans, summary lists of allergies and meds, and past medical history were documented every visit.
- ▶ Patients are all managed through NextGen EMR's Workflow module, whereby each staff member can quickly ascertain a patient's current status and also create, assign, or complete tasks associated with the care of the patient.
- ▶ At follow-up visits, the practice prints a document of a patient's past medical histories and hands it to the patient while in the waiting room. The patient can approve or correct the form while waiting, saving the provider time and the patient the hassle of completing additional forms, and the practice can more quickly and easily be credited for a review of systems.
- ▶ The practice is providing such high quality service to referring physicians that they have seen tremendous referral business. The EMR, according to Bonini, "is fostering a terrific relationship with primary care providers, making our practice the referral of choice with them." Service highlights include instant chart notes with brief summary text to referring physicians and instantaneous answers to any questions because chart pulls are unnecessary.
- ▶ High customer satisfaction - Bonini has found that both patients and internal customers have been extremely impressed with the quick, accurate service the practice can provide using NextGen EMR. Patients calling with refill requests or other questions can get immediate results, as providers have the chart instantaneously. "It's very easy to look smart when every thing is sitting in front of your face," says Bonini. "People are so amazed, they call up and ask for something and while they're still on the phone I tell them I've just faxed it to them straight from the EMR. They don't believe me."

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