



Triangle Orthopaedic Associates A NextGen Case Study

Overview

Practice

Triangle Orthopaedic Associates, P.A, in Durham, North Carolina

<http://www.triangleortho.com>

Practice Profile

A physician-directed medical practice that cares for patients with musculoskeletal and pain problems

Business Problem

The need to re-engineer and organize seven practice locations.

Solution

Implemented NextGen EPM in 2002 followed by NextGen EMR and have used the reporting tools and electronic claims to reduce staff and increase revenue.

Product Distinctions

- ▶ Robust reporting features
- ▶ Fully integrated EPM and EMR
- ▶ Knowledge Base Model for Orthopedics

Benefits

- ▶ Practice analysis
- ▶ Stronger clinical documentation and coding
- ▶ Remarkable transcription and courier savings
- ▶ Increased over-the-counter collections

Life Much Easier Now for Orthopedic Practice

Stuck with a difficult-to-use physician practice management system for years, Karen May, COO of Triangle Orthopaedic Associates, simply wanted something that would make life a bit easier.

"We had so many satellite offices, with charts going in a hundred different directions, medical records storage issues, off-site storage problems, we desperately needed to take that next step to what a practice should really look like," stated May.

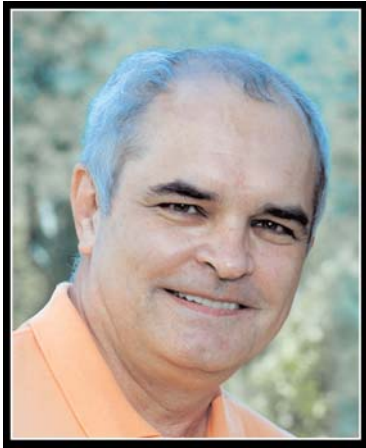
And when Triangle Orthopaedic implemented the enterprise practice management (EPM) system from NextGen Healthcare Information Systems, May not only got something that made life much easier, she also got excellent results, including improved administrative processes, reduced costs, and instant integration with the practice's electronic medical record system.

"The system we were using really didn't have the reporting capabilities we needed," May says. "Plus, the customer service was beginning to lag. Our software vendor had gotten too big, and the company wasn't giving us the attention we needed."

After an exhaustive search for an alternative - hampered by a false start with another vendor's system that again didn't meet the practice's needs - Triangle finally found NextGen EPM and never looked back.

"Within three weeks of signing with NextGen we began training and were live a few weeks later. It was so fast. Increased revenue was coming through the door within four days. All offices went live within a week," explained May.

The system quickly provided the 19-physician Durham, NC-based practice with features and functions that made it easy to generate reports, train new users, manage accounts, process claims, and collect payments at the time of service.



William J. Mallon, MD

A former professional golfer and now known as "The Golf Doctor™," Dr. Mallon frequently treats golfers with injuries at Triangle Orthopaedic.

Easy Does It

Reporting, which had always been difficult with Triangle's previous practice management system, is remarkably easy with NextGen EPM and was a real selling point, May says.

With the system's ad-hoc report writer, users can build customized reports and save them for future use or export them to other Windows applications or to HTML.

"You can run a report and pull virtually any information, and it literally only takes about three seconds to build," May says. "We can quantify anything at any time. It really makes it easy to get a handle on how well our practice is performing from a business standpoint."

For example, May routinely taps the report-writing function to assess how well each of the practice's satellite offices are performing. In a matter of seconds, she can pull a report that shows which offices are generating surgeries and which are not. Such information helps Triangle assess the financial health of each of its satellite facilities.

May finds other reports extremely useful as well. One particular report run daily helps determine whether the front desk obtained certain authorizations. Other reports identify whether any processing ICD-9s require modifiers to be appended for Medicare submissions.

Getting Productive

The user friendliness is not limited to the reporting function, however. The entire system is intuitive. As a result, the practice can train new employees to use the system in two weeks, whereas users took about six months to get up to speed with the previous system.

"NextGen is a very logical system, both for end-users who use the system's functions to run the practice and for super users who create the system's master files," May says. "People can get on the system and learn how to use it right away." May also attributes NextGen EPM's extensive flexibility and unique customization capabilities for this reduction in training time, as it clearly helped drive user adoption and speed return on investment.

Triangle also takes advantage of NextGen EPM's WorkLog Manager, a tasking system that can be automated and also allow users to assign tasks to other users, monitoring completion and productivity. WorkLog Manager is ideal for any number of tasks, and Triangle particularly utilizes it for obtaining patient information once an appointment is made and to task out Medicare-related errors that need to be rectified.



Errors Be Gone

NextGen's Enterprise Patient Index (EPI) is another feature that makes the system so easy to master. The EPI enables users to create a visit, then post charges, payments and adjustments for any combination of locations, providers, fee schedules and payers - all from a single screen.

Patients who see multiple providers - for example, an orthopedic surgeon and a physical therapist - are billed under one account. New or changed information is only entered once, and it then cascades across the system. With Triangle's previous practice management system, when data was changed in the patient's orthopedic surgery account the change would not be reflected in the physical therapy account.

This simplified account management also leads to improved claims processing. Because the EPI results in improved accuracy, Triangle is now producing "cleaner" claims. In addition, the reporting function makes it possible for the practice to track each doctor's CPT and ICD-9 code submission history. It is easy now for Triangle to perform chart audits to ensure they are billing appropriately, and analyses have allowed them to code accurately at a higher level. "These reports help us make sure the doctors are billing correctly and not missing revenue," May says.

With NextGen EPM in place, the practice is submitting about 98% of its claims without errors, a vast improvement when compared to the 70% rate the practice had with the previous system. In addition, accounts receivable days have dropped from 70 with the previous system to just 38 with NextGen EPM. Because the practice bills an average of \$100,000 per day, cash flow has improved by more than \$3 million per year.

The EPM system is also helping Triangle collect more money up front. Front desk staff members are alerted when a patient's insurer requires a co-payment. The system also keeps track of which staff members are consistently collecting these co-payments from patients.

"The system clarifies the benefits before patients come in. So, we know that if they have a \$1,000 deductible we have to collect it," May says. "We used to rarely even ask for the co-pay at the time of service. It was more of an afterthought."

Over-the-counter collections have increased by about \$60,000 per month since implementing the system, with a goal of \$250,000 collected each month.

"We can quantify anything at any time. It really makes it easy to get a handle on how well our practice is performing from a business standpoint."

Karen May, Director of Operations



"NextGen is very customer-service oriented and takes care of our needs."

Karen May, Director of Operations

Let's Work Together

Although the practice management system has resulted in many benefits, the fact that it integrates easily with NextGen's electronic medical records (EMR) system makes it even more valuable for Triangle.

Even though Triangle had purchased an EMR from its previous physician practice management vendor, the practice never implemented the system. "It was so difficult to use. It never even got out of the box," May says.

NextGen EMR, however, is providing clinicians with easy access to clinical information, enabling them to deliver better care to patients.

In addition, the EMR is resulting in the following savings:

- ▶ \$16,000 per year due to the elimination of paper charts
- ▶ \$420,000 annually from reduced transcription costs
- ▶ \$36,000 annually emanating from the decreased need to transport patient files from one office to another.

Using paper charts, Triangle realized their level of FTEs according to MGMA standards was out of line with what an orthopedic practice should have. With the help of NextGen EMR and EPM and resultant streamlined processes, Triangle reduced or eliminated 30 FTEs overall in less than a year from implementation, saving approximately \$750,000 annually.

These efficiencies have allowed Triangle to plan for expansion of their business with confidence, knowing they have the systems in place to handle the complexities of a large, multi-location practice in an increasingly technological, interoperative healthcare industry.

"All in all, having a practice management and EMR system that are both easy to use has made a huge difference in our practice," May says. "Before, it was a struggle to use our information systems. Now, because they are so user-friendly, we are able to take full advantage of technology, and the clinical and financial benefits just keep adding up."

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