



Clinics Cut Costs and Improve Patient Care with Mobile, Paperless Record Keeping

Overview

United States

Healthcare

Three representative medical clinics:

- Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists in Mississippi
- Middlesex Cardiology in Connecticut
- Granite Medical, a multi-specialty practice in Massachusetts

A traditional clinical management system is costly and labor intensive because it doesn't integrate scheduling and seeing patients, updating medical records, and correctly completing billing procedures.

The clinics deployed a mobile, wireless practice management solution developed by Amicore and deployed on Tablet PCs running the Microsoft® Windows® XP Tablet PC Edition operating system.

- Saves nearly U.S.\$40,000 annually in office products
- Reduces transcription fees by
- Cuts accounts receivable time
- Meets HIPAA requirements

“Having an electronic medical record on Tablet PCs has been a lifesaver. We easily move information among our three clinics... We are avoiding nearly all of the old transcription costs.”

John Colebaugh, Administrative Director, Middlesex Cardiology

Three medical clinics needed a comprehensive, mobile, and physician-friendly practice management solution to eliminate paper-based medical charts and electronically link processes such as patient scheduling, note transcription, prescription writing, and insurance claim submission. Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists, Middlesex Cardiology, and Granite Medical represent the growing number of practices turning to a solution powered by Amicore software and Microsoft® Windows® XP Tablet PC Edition running on Tablet PC hardware. This integrated, mobile system is increasing the quality of medical record keeping, maximizing reimbursement, and enhancing the entire patient encounter. These clinics have accelerated their cash flow and are saving tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars through significant reductions in office supplies and the near elimination of transcription fees.

"With paper-based records it is impossible for the doctors to access patient information 100 percent of the time.. (we) decided to find a system that would allow our doctors and nurses to access patient information from anywhere and at anytime."

Don Trexler, Executive Director, Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists

Situation

As the U.S. population ages and concentrates in numerous regional centers, group medical practices of all varieties are experiencing exceptional growth and pressure to see more patients without compromising care. Insurers continue to require extensive notes justifying procedures and to exert downward pressure on reimbursement rates for all office visits and courses of action prescribed by the physicians. As a result, practices are looking for cost-effective technology to redefine traditional paper-based systems—streamlining daily procedures and boosting overall clinic efficiency.

Scheduling and seeing a patient, creating a visit note and updating a patient's medical record, and correctly completing insurance and billing forms in a traditional paper-based clinical management system is an extremely labor-intensive process. New information is added to the patient's paper chart by several individuals and on a variety of forms. The patient, administrative staff, medical assistant or nurse, and the doctor all contribute information to the chart. History, diagnosis, prescriptions, and any notes referring to procedures performed are compiled and in some cases transcribed following the appointment. Finally, the paper chart is updated and filed manually, with each step adding expense and risk of error. Additionally, activities such as setting up appointments, patient history input, scheduling of medical staff, referrals, insurance billing, and prescriptions are not integrated and therefore require additional administrative staff to coordinate and complete.

Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists in Mississippi, Middlesex Cardiology in Connecticut, and Granite Medical, a multi-specialty practice in Massachusetts, are all growing group practices with between 14 to 30 medical professionals and 30 to 115 staff

members, each seeing up to 250 patients per day. Middlesex Cardiology, for example, has doubled the number of patient visits processed over the past five years. "In our area, demand for cardiology services was outstripping supply," says John Colebaugh, Administrative Director at Middlesex Cardiology. "We had to find a way to expand our physical facilities, expand the number of providers, and support it with an integrated management infrastructure that saved money." Granite also sought a solution to the growing cost inefficiencies and bottlenecks caused by the lack of integration among front office scheduling and paper-based charting and transcription, referral, and prescription systems driven by clinicians.

Also concerned about record keeping inefficiencies and maintaining its high quality of patient care, Bienville Orthopaedic conducted a study to identify potential or future problem areas. It found that at any given time three to five percent of patient records were unavailable when a doctor needed to reference the information. The paper file might be on an insurance clerk's desk or in a doctor's car, or the doctor might be taking an emergency call from home at night or between Bienville Orthopaedic locations. "With paper-based records it is impossible for the doctors to access patient information 100 percent of the time," says Don Trexler, Executive Director at Bienville Orthopaedic. "We found the inevitability of missing records unacceptable and decided to find a system that would allow our doctors and nurses to access patient information from anywhere and at anytime."

Solution

Today, all three medical practices have fully implemented a mobile, wireless clinical management solution developed by Amicore and deployed on Tablet PCs running the

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Dr. Guy Spinelli, Granite Medical

Microsoft® Windows® XP Tablet PC Edition operating system. Founded by Pfizer, Microsoft, and IBM, Amicore is a provider of integrated, patient-centric clinical and practice management systems that are physician friendly, easy to use, fast, and mobile.

Doctors now carry a lightweight Tablet PC that offers all the mobility and ease of input of the familiar pen-to-paper charting system while eliminating hours of costly coordination and administration.

With the digital pen-to-screen input and inking system of the Tablet PC, doctors can tap through Amicore’s comprehensive diagnostic guideline screens, select appropriate treatments, track and code the medical procedures that have been performed, and ink or voice additional notes. The clinical guidelines have been developed by Amicore in close consultation with practicing physicians. The medical record is created in real time, updated automatically using a wireless network connection, and managed through a Microsoft SQL Server™-based network.

At Granite Medical, the Tablet PC messaging system is used to inform doctors and medical assistants of a patient’s telephone inquiry or arrival, so there is no need to check a white board or track down a busy nurse to find out who is ready in a particular exam room. The mobile Amicore system helps clinic staff manage their schedules from anywhere in the clinic by informing them which patients have arrived, where they are located, and when they are ready for a doctor’s care.

Dr. Guy Spinelli says, “We’re a practice of about 22 physicians. The wireless messaging and mobility of the Amicore system is an excellent efficiency tool for us. A patient will call in with a medical issue and the message will be sent directly to the doctor’s Tablet PC.

It is not only an instant message to the medical staff, but also an excellent method for tracking our clinics’ follow-up with patients—a paperless paper trail if you will. And it has an integrated prescription writer, so if a patient who calls me needs to start on an antibiotic, I can pull up the prescription writer in my Tablet PC and fax the prescription directly to the pharmacy. I never need to hang up with the patient or call the pharmacy directly.”

Prior to deploying the mobile management system at Bienville Orthopaedic, all paper charts were located in a records room and pulled for the day’s appointments. A new patient might fill out four to five additional paper forms upon arrival. Medical assistants have added blood pressure, weight, and patient’s condition on another sheet of paper. Finally, the doctor has added a dictated diagnosis and several procedure notes. Completing the medical records for each day’s appointments required several hours of costly transcription and lengthened the billing and reimbursement cycle by days or weeks.

At Middlesex Cardiology, electronic practice management starts with the appointment scheduling process. The system finds the next available or most convenient appointment time for a patient and ensures arrival with an automatically generated reminder phone call. Ninety-five percent of the note documenting a patient’s visit is input through a series of prompts in the Amicore system. Doctors use the pen in the Tablet PC to select from appropriate guidelines and augment them with audio and digitally inked messages.

“Having an electronic medical record on Tablet PCs has been a lifesaver. We easily move information among our three clinics. Doctors can get at patient information anywhere in the clinics, at the hospital, when they are at home, and even on vacation. We

don't have to be planning for rooms to hold more charts and having additional staff to carry them around," Colebaugh says. "We are avoiding nearly all of the old transcription costs. We used to pay U.S.\$10,000 in outsourced transcription fees a month, and now we are spending only \$40,000 for the entire year."

Benefits

Through the deployment of a Tablet PC-based Amicore system, all three practices are enjoying terrific benefits, including gains in efficiency and reductions in costs. From office materials to transcription fees to administrative and medical assistant staff, each of the practices is enjoying a significant reduction in expenditure. They are also benefiting from improved information access and management and higher patient satisfaction.

- Bienville Orthopaedic, having eliminated the need for most file folders and sticky notes, is saving nearly \$40,000 annually.
- Middlesex Cardiology and Bienville Orthopaedic each estimate that it saves between \$100,000 and \$200,000 by eliminating transcription services.
- Bienville Orthopaedic no longer uses external transcription services and has reduced internal staff from four to three.
- Insurance reimbursements times are being cut by up to 50 percent. In many cases, accounts receivable have gone from more than 80 days to less than 50, accelerating cash flow.
- Because access to medical records is monitored and secure, HIPAA requirements for patient privacy are satisfied easily.
- Comprehensive and easily accessed visit records eliminate missed procedures and maximize reimbursement.
- Doctors have access to accurate patient records anytime.

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For more information about Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists, call (228) 875-1849 or visit the Web site at: www.bienvilleortho.com

For more information about Middlesex Cardiology call (860) 347-4258 or visit the Web site at: www.middlesexcardiology.com

For more information about Granite Medical call (617) 471-0033 or visit the Web site at: www.granitemedical.com

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For more information about Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/tabletpc/default.mspx

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