

Beyond Meaningful Use: A No-Cost Solution for a Profitable Primary Care Practice



Practice:

Dr. Joel Fine

Fine & Associates, Internal
Medicine Specialists

Profile:

A mid-sized internal
medicine/primary care
practice established
in 1995. Dr. Fine also
performs on-site
ancillary studies and
diagnostic services.

Number of offices: 1

Number of providers: 1

Number of staff: 9

Business Problem:

Physicians must adopt and demonstrate meaningful use of Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems by Oct. 1, 2014, or be assessed a 1 percent penalty from Medicare.

Background:

Dr. Fine attended a large meeting of area physicians in 2011 and, when asked, was the only doctor to state that he would never implement an EHR system. “I did not want to be forced to make such a massive change,” he said. He was eventually motivated to do so, however, by the potential loss in revenue from Medicare penalties for non-compliance.

Dr. Fine’s practice manager, Stefanie Fine, knew that implementing an EHR would be necessary, but was frustrated by the high-priced, time-consuming options on the market. “The expense of the systems we were looking at was just amazing. Software and training costs were outrageous, along with hardware for servers and additional IT support. It just added up,” she says. “We kept thinking ‘Why bother?’ Even with the Meaningful Use incentive, we probably wouldn’t break even.”

The Fine & Associates team determined that an affordable EHR must be implemented as soon as possible to meet current federal guidelines and provide patients with improved access to their own health information while not disrupting practice workflow.

In 2011 the team began a search for an EHR solution that would fit their practice. Objectives were to find a product that would:

1. Meet criteria for Meaningful Use for all stages, avoiding Medicare penalties;
2. Improve patient access to their own health information via a comprehensive, easy-to-use patient portal;
3. Feature seamless implementation with practice functionality.

After reviewing several other EHR vendors, Fine & Associates made the choice to implement Hello Health, a comprehensive, no-cost EHR solution designed to create practice revenue and engage patients for primary care physician practices. Hello Health is certified as a Complete EHR by the Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT®) and meets all criteria for Meaningful Use.

Hello Health’s patient management platform includes practice management software, an EHR and a complete suite of patient engagement tools - at no cost to you. And, because it is a subscription-based system, it can generate revenue for physician practices through patient subscriptions.



Hello Health stood out to Dr. Fine as being pro-physician and pro-patient. “Service to my patients is, of course, paramount,” Dr. Fine says, “but my driver is maintaining a profitable practice.” That being said, Dr. Fine was determined to use a system that fulfilled the needs of his patients and his busy practice. “Hello Health was a good system first, and it was free second.”

Hello Health’s investment in its clients was another factor in their favor, Stefanie adds. “Because of the Hello Health business model, they only succeed if we succeed. There’s no other vendor that is like that.”

Stage 1: Done

Hello Health’s offerings covered the items on Dr. Fine’s Meaningful Use list. With components for e-prescribing, a patient portal, accessible medical information and a patient-facing Web site, the practice was able to easily meet the criteria for the federal incentive program.

“The technology I’ve implemented in my practice allows me to provide excellent clinical care, while also helping me stay in business profitably, for the long term,” Dr. Fine says.

Patient Engagement

Dr. Fine’s team wanted patients to use the EHR to be involved and invested in their own healthcare.

Since implementation, patient adoption of the Hello Health portal has cut down patient phone calls tremendously. Eleven months after introducing the service to patients, nearly 800 have enrolled with the system – at an annual fee of \$36 – to enjoy more efficient communication with Dr. Fine via the Web.

“An interactive patient portal was an extremely important factor when choosing an EHR, and many patients really love it,” Stefanie says. “The portal has provided us a better connection with all of our patients, which results in a better quality of care.”

Painless Implementation

Hello Health’s web-based technology made it possible to keep costs and hassles low. “No hardware was required to get the system up and running, which was a huge relief,” says Stefanie. Plus, all training was free and unlimited.

When Dr. Fine was assured that the practice would maintain ownership of its data in a usable format, and that Hello Health was taking steps to ensure its longevity as a company, he was ready to move forward with implementation.

“We decided for the integration that we really needed to do a step-by-step process. We took it in phases, and scheduled onsite trainings at the convenience of our staff,” Stefanie says. “Hello Health literally held our hand through the entire process and continues to do so whenever we need them.”