



Family Medicine Associates of South Attleboro

Practice Flourishes with athenahealth Suite of Services

At a Glance

CLIENT

Family Medicine Associates of
South Attleboro, MA

ORGANIZATION

- ▶ 12 physicians, 1 mid-level practitioner
- ▶ 1 billing staff
- ▶ 2,000+ Patient Visits per Month

ISSUES

- ▶ Under-performing, costly billing service
- ▶ Paper charting expensive, time-consuming
- ▶ Staff spend 4 to 6 hours daily making routine calls

SOLUTION

- ▶ athenaCollectorSM
- ▶ athenaClinicalsSM
- ▶ athenaCommunicatorSM

RESULTS*

- ▶ Days in Accounts Receivable (DAR) reduced from 60+ days to 30 days; claim denials drop by 2/3; revenue increases
- ▶ Fully-utilized EHR saves physician and staff time
- ▶ Practice saves significantly on costs of making patient calls, improves patient satisfaction**

What is the key to running a successful practice? Daniel Brown, MD of Family Medicine Associates of South Attleboro (FMASA) says, “When you find something that works really, really well, you stick with it.” That’s what Brown and his colleagues did when they signed on with athenahealth in 2005, and they haven’t looked back since.

The large family practice located near Boston, MA, started with athenaCollector, a web-based physician billing and practice management service; later added athenaClinicals, a flexible, CCHIT-certified electronic health record (EHR) service; and, most recently, added athenaCommunicator, an on-demand, automated, and live communication service that supports and streamlines patient-physician interactions outside the exam room.

They are so pleased with the suite of services and products offered by athenahealth, Brown jokes: “If athenahealth came out with a new brand of coffee next week, we would all start drinking it!”

One reason for the practice’s allegiance to athenahealth’s model is that all of its fully-integrated services are focused on driving revenue into the practice. Brown says that factor alone is enough to make the athenahealth/FMASA relationship a long-term one.



Only One Biller for the 13-Provider Practice

After implementing athenaCollector, Brown reports “claim denials plummeted to less than 3% from double digits. Days in Accounts Receivable also dropped — from more than 60 days to approximately 30 days.”* The most telling metric, Brown says, is the provider to biller ratio. With 13 providers, the practice only employs one biller. In fact, athenaCollector is so user-friendly that he and one other physician do their own billing. That cost saving alone, he says, has had an enormous impact on lowering overhead.



User-friendly, Web-based EHR Enjoys 100% Utilization Rate

When the practice took the next step and implemented athenaClinicals as its EHR service, the results were just as impressive. Also bottom-line focused, athenaClinicals has minimal start-up costs and there’s no hardware or software to install or upgrade, which makes it a low-investment, high-return clinical solution. Brown reports that he and his colleagues have found athenaClinicals to be so flexible and user-friendly that the practice has achieved a 100% utilization rate.

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– Dan Brown, MD



Vastly Improved Patient Communications Saves Time and Money

With these positive athenahealth experiences under their belt, Brown says the practice's next challenge was to get a better handle on patient communications, which consumed an enormous amount of staff time. “We were looking for a better way to communicate with patients, so in the summer of 2009, when athenahealth was looking to pilot test its newest service, athenaCommunicator, we jumped on board.”

The results have been dramatic, Brown reports. “The staff were previously spending 4 to 6 hours a day making and returning calls. athenaCommunicator has freed up an enormous amount of staff time.” In the past six months the new service has delivered on average 2,500 reminder calls a month about scheduled appointments, which can include patient-specific instructions. Brown estimates that the practice is saving approximately \$1,250 a month on the cost of making reminder calls alone, not including the cost savings associated with the decreased number of no-shows, which is now below 4%.**



Patients Pleased with Automated Lab Results, Reminder Calls

athenaCommunicator's ResultsCall is also saving the practice time and money by delivering lab results either directly by phone or by prompting patients to retrieve the information from practice's new secure web portal. In January 2010 alone, it delivered more than 1,000 results

Dr. Brown is certain that the number of patients who use the practice's portal will continue to grow. In six months, the practice has collected email addresses for nearly 27% of its active patient base. Nearly 10% have registered on the portal which they can use to do such things as update demographics, request routine information, and retrieve lab results. Brown estimates that the decreasing demand on staff time is on track to save the practice nearly \$20,000 this year, plus save nearly \$15,000 a year on postage, patient statements, and other communications.**

But the best thing, Brown says, has been the reaction of his patients. “The satisfaction rate is very high. Patients are able to interact with our practice more easily, plus they are getting their lab results quicker and they appreciate that.”

* These results reflect the experience of this particular practice and are not necessarily what every athenahealth client should expect. In Q4 2009 athenahealth average client Days in Accounts Receivable (DAR) was 38.5 days, average client First Pass Resolve Rate was 93.5%, and average increase in collections was 6.5%.

** athenaCommunicator data was gathered during our beta testing period, prior to full release to the general public.



there is a better way

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At athenahealth, we know that every practice is different.

Contact us to find out how we can help you.

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