



Case Study

*Solo Physician
Doubles Revenue,
Gets Work-Life Balance*

Helen Mirau, MD



athenahealth
THERE IS A BETTER WAY

Before athenahealth

After practicing with a mid-size group in another state, Dr. Helen Mirau decided to open her own OB/GYN practice when she moved to Ohio in 2004. Initially, the billing was done in-house, resulting in a system that was extremely inefficient and labor intensive. In January 2007, Dr. Mirau made the decision to outsource the billing to a local company who promised her a functioning billing system within two weeks. But eight weeks later, the day before going live, she discovered that every patient's birth date in the system was incorrect, which turned out to be the tip of the iceberg when it came to the number of mistakes made by the company.

Fed up, Dr. Mirau decided to implement athenahealth's athenaCollectorSM in March of 2007.

The athenahealth Solution

athenaCollector is a web-based billing and practice management solution. The practice's staff is able to catch and correct billing errors before they become problems, thanks to athenahealth's rules database. The rules database is a vast, ever-expanding proprietary collection of real-time payer rules built on the knowledge of more than 18,500 providers. Practice staff are alerted with up-to-date payer requirements during the process of submitting claims.

"I never was good with computers, but athenaCollector is a very user-friendly, well thought out program," Dr. Mirau said. "My two part-time receptionists have no medical or billing training, and they were comfortable with the system after a couple days."

"athenahealth has a smooth, efficient implementation approach. I did get pretty overwhelmed just before going live, but my implementation manager was wonderful and held my hand through the entire process. Just think about how much you can lose – time, money, patients – when you don't have the right system in the first place."

Freedom from Software

Dr. Mirau is happy to leave behind the cost and hassle of using software. "It was time consuming and expensive," she said. "You had to pay for updates and for technical support. We had some costly visits from the tech guys on a regular basis."

She also pointed out that software often left a good deal of room for human error. "We all make mistakes," she admitted. "Transposing numbers, leaving out critical information. But athenaCollector catches almost everything before the claim is sent out."

AT A GLANCE

CLIENT

Helen K. Mirau, MD,
Dayton, Ohio

ORGANIZATION

Single provider OB/GYN practice

ISSUES

- ▶ Unreliable, inconsistent billing system
- ▶ Mounting debt
- ▶ Time-consuming follow-up with payers

SOLUTION

athenaCollectorSM

RESULTS

- ▶ Doubled revenue
- ▶ Reduced debt
- ▶ Fewer claims denied
- ▶ Streamlined, intuitive practice management
- ▶ Confidence to grow practice without adding staff

What's more, Dr. Mirau explained, "Every payment goes right to my electronic lockbox." With financial reports she can run "in less than a second," Dr. Mirau can track every payment, claim, and a host of practice performance measures.

Revenue Doubles, With More Time for Patient Care (and Time Off)

Dr. Mirau has now doubled the revenue the practice generated before switching to athenahealth – after just a few months with the service. And she credits the system with improving her work-life balance.

"It has drastically reduced the amount of work we have to do to get paid. We simply enter the charges, and the rest is pretty much on autopilot." She continued, "I don't have to work every weekend analyzing the denials and non-payments. Prior to athenahealth, my staff spent a large portion of their time contacting insurance companies to follow-up on denials. We no longer spend all of our time this way. Now, most claims are paid promptly with the first submission. Contracting with athenahealth has allowed us to spend the majority of our time on patient care."

Reduced Claim Follow-Up

"An important distinction that sets athenahealth apart is its integrity when it comes to working denied claims," emphasized Dr. Mirau. "Other companies will only go after the highest paying claims. But athenahealth will follow up whether it's for \$50 or \$2,000. It maximizes my efficiency because I don't have to spend lots of time and money tracking down those small, unpaid claims – which can really add up for a small practice."

She noted that "in addition to following up on claims, athenahealth's rules database is exceptional at catching billing errors before they are sent out, minimizing the amount of claims with problems in the first place."

Always Improving the System

"I've been so impressed with the athenahealth staff," Dr. Mirau said. "They are always trying to improve their services, and they actually encourage clients to participate in this." She cited one example from her own practice: After having difficulty getting paid on a claim she knew was correct, she suggested adding a rule to athenahealth's rules database. After working with athenahealth's staff, the rule was added to the system. "They are so responsive," she said.

Being Profitable and Doing Good Work

Looking ahead, Dr. Mirau expects to continue growing her patient base without adding extra staff, thanks to athenahealth's time and cost saving services. "Today, doctors have a hard time doing good work and being profitable. Reimbursements are down, overhead is up. athenahealth helps you stay efficient in this tough environment."

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- Helen K. Mirau, MD

At athenahealth, we know that every practice is different.

Contact us to find out how we can help you.



athenahealth

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