



Case Study

Associated Hand Surgeons Uniting Locations to Increase Revenues

Associated Hand Surgeons (AHS), established over 20 years ago, is a four-provider hand surgery practice with three locations in the Santa Barbara area. AHS Practice Manager Catherine Montgomery also oversees De La Vina Ambulatory Surgicenter (DLVSC), where hand surgeons from the practice perform surgery along with providers in several other specialties.

In the dark about declining revenue

Before joining athenahealth, the practices used an outside billing agency. "Over time, I noticed that revenue for one of our physicians was slowly creeping down," said Montgomery. "It was difficult to extract information from the program they used to do our billing. It didn't have reporting capability. There was no transparency. So we couldn't figure out why revenue was going down."

To get to the bottom of the issue, Montgomery hired a consultant to create an independent computer program. The program used information from the billing company to create a picture of the practice's billing history. She hoped it would tell them more about the claims submission process - what was being paid, and what wasn't. "The program took us about eight months to complete. When it was done, we could see our billing company wasn't doing a very good job. They didn't do any follow-up on claims that weren't paid. There were no appeals. So we started looking for other types of billing software."

Making the switch

When they came across athenaCollectorSM over four years ago, they knew that traditional billing companies wouldn't solve their problems. They needed a solution that could provide instant, real-time access to their practice's financial data across multiple locations and providers.

In contrast to software, athenaCollector is an online, network-based billing and practice management solution. So practices can track and access information on any claim, from its starting point to its payment date. There is instant access to data - from staff productivity to payer revenue - for every business decision practices need to make. What's more, with thousands of physicians participating in athenahealth's services, it's easy to view aggregate performance data and compare financial, operating and other practice-based measures to other practices in a certain specialty, region or nationally.

"Switching billing providers is a big risk for providers. So we started a single physician on athenaCollector at first," said Montgomery. "We saw his revenue jump almost immediately. All the other providers joined shortly thereafter."

At a Glance

Organization

Hand surgery practice with three locations and four providers

Independent surgery center covering multiple specialties

One practice management team overseeing both locations

Client

Associated Hand Surgeons and De La Vina Ambulatory Surgicenter, Santa Barbara, CA

Issue

Declining revenue, no transparency into practice billing, inability to follow up on unpaid claims

Results

27% increase in revenue, real-time access to practice data, staffing consolidation

Big gains for a big practice

Since all providers in both practices joined athenahealth three years ago, the surgery center and AHS experienced a combined 27% increase in collections. "We were a big, successful practice before athenahealth," said Montgomery. "This revenue increase is on top of an already thriving practice. And that number goes up every month."

Though the two centers are under different ownership, they share athenaCollector and a staff of 17 billing and claims entry employees. athenahealth allows them to share information automatically between the centers and locations. "This has significantly decreased the amount of work we have to do," said Montgomery. "Information entered at one location automatically shows up in all other locations."

In addition to revenue increases, Montgomery said that providers and staff saw other major improvements right from the beginning. "We scan all provider notes into each patient visit," she said. "The system can also hold all the paperwork needed for Workers' Comp claims, which gets very complicated. At the click of the mouse, we can see all the things required by Workers' Comp, including the provider's notes, on any patient across all locations."

Even better, by joining athenahealth, the practice gained access to the company's massive, high performance "back office." That means athenahealth staff take care of time-consuming activities like appeals, claims follow-up and advocacy with payers - lifting the burden of executing these activities at the practice level.

"We saw a dramatic change in staffing," Montgomery noted. Because of athenahealth's behind-the-scenes support, taking care of appeals and following up on claims is much more efficient. "We consolidated staff positions. We now have a more computer-savvy billing group. And the biggest change is that we don't have to spend so much time managing the day-to-day activities of providers. We were also able to cut the amount of time we spend on transcriptions in half."

A true partnership

AHS is heavily focused on Workers' Compensation claims. "We have a lot of requirements when it comes to submitting claims for Worker's Comp," said Montgomery. "athenahealth listened to what we needed and made changes to the claims submission process to accommodate our needs."

"athenahealth is the right path for physicians to be on," said Montgomery. "We're big fans. Now that we see how powerful athenahealth tools can be, we would never go back to anything else."



athenahealth

athenahealth, Inc.

311 Arsenal Street

Watertown, MA 02472

866.817.5738

www.athenahealth.com