Coastal Orthopedics
Conway, South Carolina

Making the Switch: Choosing athenaOne Pays Off

Coastal Orthopedics was struggling to make their EHR and practice management systems work together. As interfaces grew unwieldy, staff became tied up with trouble-shooting, and they knew they needed a better solution. After a smooth transition to athenaOne, a single suite of network-enabled EHR, practice management, and care coordination services, the practice optimized financial performance, reduced staff workload, and has a platform for successfully adapting to the changing reimbursement landscape.

"Our System Wasn't Efficient"

When Coastal Orthopedics considered the future of healthcare—and their own growth—they knew they needed a single, integrated system that reduced the administrative burden on staff and allowed for easy exchange of data.

"Before athenahealth, it took a lot of resources to get patients through our practice," says Andrew Wade, practice administrator at Coastal Orthopedics. "Our system wasn't efficient. Whether it was helping an injured child get back to the playing field, or a hip replacement for a retiree, it took an enormous amount of data entry across two separate systems to create the outcomes we wanted for our patients."

Plus, while the practice had successfully participated in Meaningful Use, they felt unprepared for the complex changes coming under programs like MACRA and MIPS.

"Looking down the road at value-based care, we saw the need to collect a lot more data, with increasingly strict rules for claims," says Mr. Wade. "What we had wasn't scalable. We couldn't grow. We wanted an all-in-one solution."

Finding the Right Partner

Coastal Orthopedics chose athenahealth because of its unique combination of a connected network, expert knowledge, and ability to perform burdensome work on behalf of clients.

"We are good at orthopedics. We are not in the computer business," says Mr. Wade. "We were spending too much time maintaining our IT infrastructure. We needed to refocus our energy on serving patients."

With athenahealth's cloud-based network, always up-to-date and accessible from anywhere, the practice can focus on optimizing patient care instead of maintaining software.

At a Glance

- Established in 1984
- Serves mainly Medicare-age patients and younger sports-related injury patients
- 7 physicians
- 4 physician assistants, 1 nurse practitioner

Solutions

- athenaOne®
  - athenaClinicals®
  - athenaCollector®
  - athenaCommunicator®
  - athenaCoordinator®

Issues

- Separate EHR and practice management systems were time-consuming, unwieldy
- Staff overwhelmed with software updates, patient phone calls
- Lack of transparency into billing
- No platform for growth
- Unprepared for population health management and value-based care

Results*

- Single integrated system for EHR, practice management, and patient engagement
- Streamlined workflows reduce work for staff, providers
- 66% same-day encounter close rate
- Complete visibility into billing, with accounts receivable down to 31 days
- Confidently prepared for evolving quality programs

"Our IT staff doesn't have to work on software updates anymore," says Mr. Wade. "They focus on our users and patients, making sure the system is working for them. They help providers make each appointment efficient and patient-focused."

Mr. Wade especially appreciates that athenahealth's model can meet the needs of a growing practice. "athenahealth platforms us to grow in a way that is scalable," says Mr. Wade.

In addition, athenahealth's support means the practice is future-proof. "With athena's experts continually working on new reimbursement requirements, we are prepared to meet whatever regulatory changes are coming—including population health," says Mr. Wade. "We are well positioned to meet any future payment scenario."

The practice also benefits from athenahealth's dedicated back-office teams that alleviate administrative burden by taking on paperwork, tracking claims, handling eligibility checking, and more. "With athenahealth taking on the payment posting and other time-consuming work, our team can focus on more complex problems," says Mr. Wade.

A "Phenomenal" Transition

Coastal Orthopedics experienced a smooth transition to athenaOne. But as with any significant change, some were hesitant about making the switch.

Mr. Wade says that open communication, a clear project plan, and hands-on training from athenahealth helped get the practice over the hump of change. He credits the athenahealth implementation model—a transparent, step-by-step approach—with the success of the transition.

"Our training was phenomenal," he says. "We saw the deficiencies in the old system. We knew how much work it took to get the outcomes we needed for patients. And we saw how athenahealth would benefit us. Things didn't really change, we just got better tools to use."

Mr. Wade noted that during the first week of using the new system, athenahealth support was excellent. "We had experts on site to answer questions, do training, and spend extra time with providers who needed to get used to the EHR," he says. "We were able to put an implementation team member in each one of our pods at 8 a.m. when the rubber hit the highway. There were enough people here, and that's huge."

Overall, Mr. Wade says the implementation process was "spot-on." "Kudos to the training team and account managers who spent the time with us to get us off the ground and running," he says. "We are doing very well today because of our strong start."

A Practice Reboot

The practice used the transition to athenaOne to tighten up workflows and improve patient care. "We cleaned out a lot of old, repetitious processes that were necessary under the old system," says Mr. Wade. "It was a reboot for the company. We leveraged this transition to improve on many processes."

Just 30 days after going live, the practice noticed significant improvements. "One of the biggest things we noticed right away is the amount of work that athenahealth took off our plates," says Mr. Wade. "Thanks to the Rules Engine, we are getting cleaner claims out the door. That's given us the best claim-to-cash conversion ratio we've ever had. Our money isn't playing jump-through-the-hoop with the insurance companies anymore."

The clinicians are happy with athenaClinicals, the EHR component of athenaOne. "Our providers recognize that athenaClinicals is much better than what we were doing before," says Mr. Wade. "They see their staff working with better tools, so they can all be more responsive and more available to patients, instead of spending too much time at the nurses' station in front of a computer."

With athenaCommunicator, the patient engagement component of athenaOne, the practice has strengthened its connection to patients. "We drive a lot of our communications with patients through the portal, which we couldn't do with our old system," says Mr. Wade. "For the first time, we can make advancements because we have transparency into what we're doing. Our response time has sped up significantly."

athenaOne has also given the practice 24/7 access to the system from anywhere. During bad weather, staff can work claims and providers can access charts from home, and administrators can send out email blasts with scheduling alerts.

"We have infinitely better access than we had before. Combined with our potential for growth, and being prepared for the future, athenahealth is the right partner for us," says Mr. Wade. "They support us in a thousand ways every day, enabling us to do what we're best at—not worrying about technology, but taking care of patients."

Find out more. Call **866.817.5738** or visit us online at **athenahealth.com**