

Pediatric Partners Medical Group

San Diego, California



EHR interface enables independent group and hospital to share clinical information

California is home to more ACOs than any other state in the nation. In Orange County and San Diego alone, lives covered by ACOs are expected to increase 12% to more than 200,000 patients by 2016*. As the rising tide of value-based care sweeps patients into large, integrated systems, independent providers like Pediatric Partners of San Diego face difficult choices.

Being locked out of an ACO network is “a concern nationwide” says Tom Mohr, MD, President and CEO of Pediatric Partners, a ten-office practice caring for 80,000 children. “I think every independent practice is up against it — especially when a hospital ACO has its own primary care physicians.”

ACO networks increase the chance that unaffiliated practices will lose patients. Yet the benefits of autonomy cannot be denied. “Remaining independent means we have much more flexibility,” says Dr. Mohr. “We can make decisions quicker. We are more likely to innovate.” And independent practices can select the EHR and practice management systems their providers prefer, rather than adopt a hospital’s enterprise system.

Switch EHRs or Be Locked Out?

When Dr. Mohr and Pediatric Partners were approached by Rady Children’s Hospital to join their newly formed ACO, the offer was contingent on Pediatric Partners switching to Epic, the hospital’s EHR. Because the success of any ACO — or any network of care delivery — is dependent on sharing clinical information, contracts generally require that members use the same EHR.

At-a-Glance

- 19 providers, 100 staff
- athenahealth practice since 2001
- 700 patient encounters daily, 500,000 visits annually
- 10 locations in San Diego, Riverside and Inyokern Counties, CA

Issues

- Retain patients and avoid lockout as regional ACO expands
- Integrate with hospital-run ACO while keeping preferred EHR
- Share patient information between practice pediatricians and hospital specialists

Solution

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

Results

- Practice works with hospital, keeps preferred EHR
- View of key patient information shared between PCPs and specialists

"It's very quick for our physicians to look at a note from a hospital specialist and then be able to order the tests that were suggested, make sure they have follow up, or put a new referral in. And we did not get charged anything for it."

—Tom Mohr, MD, President, Pediatric Partners

Pediatric Partners was open to joining an ACO managed by Rady, San Diego's largest pediatric hospital. "We have a really good relationship with specialists at the hospital," says Dr. Mohr. In fact, 51% of patients admitted to Rady come from the communities served by Pediatric Partners. Changing EHRs, however, was a deal breaker.

"I told them that I couldn't pry athenaClinicals out of the dead, cold hands of my pediatricians," laughs Mohr, who's been using athenahealth's cloud-based services since 2001.

An "Elegant" Integration of Clinical Information for PCPs and Specialists

Rady Children's Hospital agreed to a solution that will enable Pediatric Partners to join their network and keep their preferred EHR, athenaClinicals. The athenahealth Health Care Transactions team created a bi-directional interface between the two EHRs so providers could instantly share essential patient information. No faxing needed.

Now Pediatric Partners is taking advantage of an athenahealth service for today's networked landscape: building two-way clinical integrations so physicians on the athenahealth network can efficiently share and receive clinical notes with colleagues at hospitals using other EHR systems, including Epic.

"athenahealth did an elegant job," says Dr. Mohr. "When we see a note on athenaNet [the athenahealth network] from a specialist at Rady, it has been scrubbed to just the diagnosis and care plan, the one paragraph of documentation we're really interested in. It's very quick for our physicians to look at that note and then order the tests suggested or put in a new referral."

At the hospital, staff is freed up from looking through faxes to find information from Pediatric Partners and providers can access a full history for every patient. "It's right there in their record," says Dr. Mohr, "and they can easily find what they need."

Most important, patients are seeing the benefits. Recently a parent of a patient could not recall the details of a visit with a Rady specialist. "She was amazed when I said, 'Okay, let me look.' I opened the link in athenaNet and there were the neurologist's notes. I saw that he wanted an MRI and genetic work-up. I put the orders in, and it took me seconds."

A Solution for Independent Practices and Hospital ACOs

As other independent practices weigh the pros and cons of joining larger, integrated systems, hospitals can now offer an additional incentive: With free interfaces from the athenaCoordinator service, joining their network no longer means switching EHRs. They can point to Pediatric Partners of San Diego, thriving clinically and financially, yet maintaining independent preferences, including their choice of EHR.



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