

Specialty Eye Care

An EHR & Practice Management Success Story

ophthalmology
ADVANTAGE™

The Problem: Growing Practice Hampered by Outdated Chart Management

"The logistics of managing charts in our growing practice was getting out of control," says Specialty Eye Care partner E. Randy Craven, MD. "We were going through several stacks of paper every day faxing patient information back and forth, and it wasn't uncommon to head into surgery only to find the chart was somewhere else." As this multi-specialty practice reached 27 exam lanes in 5 offices, plus working at 2 ASCs, 2 laser centers and several optical shops throughout the Denver metropolitan area, the partners realized something had to change

The Solution: Now is the Time to Embark on the EHR Journey

"Getting 11 doctors to agree on anything is a challenge," says Dr. Craven. "There is no question we all had concerns about the costs and uncertainties of moving to electronic health records (EHR), but over the last couple of years, I think each of us has made the mental shift that EHR is part of our future in medicine."

Dr. Craven says the trends are clear. "First, we face increasing pressure to improve the accessibility and portability of records. That pressure is coming from Medicare, private insurance companies, hospitals and surgery centers, patients, and our own business structure," he says. "Secondly, the federal government is providing incentives for providers to make this transition now, including incentives for e-prescribing and PQRI reporting." In the past, he says, EHR was pushing the limits of technology-but that's no longer the case, thanks to faster computing speeds, improved Internet connectivity and bandwidth, and especially, better software. "At this point, the technology is sound, so what we really need are good, solid companies dedicated to what we do in eye care to see us through that transition."

The Process: Find the right EHR partner "Specialty Eye Care had been using Compulink's Ophthalmology Advantage™ practice management solution for about 6 years. "During that time, Compulink has kept our cash flow strong and demonstrated that they want to help us grow our business," says Dr. Craven. "We absolutely trust Compulink as both a business partner and a technology partner. Having gone through several successful data conversions with them as we acquired practices, I have no reservations about their ability to handle the technical demands of EHR."

Nevertheless, Dr. Craven and his partners conducted an extensive search process, reviewing other EHR systems, interviewing vendors, and visiting other practices. "We felt it was really important to get this right the first time," says Dr. Craven. "Choosing the wrong partner would risk a failed implementation and a lot of money down the drain."

Ultimately, the practice decided to expand its relationship with Compulink to include EHR. "In addition to the level of trust we already had with Compulink, we came to realize how important it is that they truly understand what we do as eye care providers," he says. With software installed in more than 3,000 ophthalmic practices, Compulink is one of the few EHR companies with an ophthalmic focus. "Most other EHR systems are really based on a primary care model, with little understanding of ophthalmology beyond a few customized screens," Dr. Craven says. "Compulink, by contrast, understands how the ophthalmic exam needs to be tightly integrated, not just with billing and scheduling, but also with the surgery center, the laser center, and the optical shop." Compulink also offers more ophthalmic device interfaces (150+) than any other vendor in the industry.

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Compulink's 15 years of EHR experience was another reason the practice made the choice they did, says Dr. Craven. "This is an important transition for any practice. We have confidence that Compulink has the implementation expertise and the training and support we need to be successful," he says. "They actually guarantee our success."

Next Stop: Implementation of Compulink's Advantage/EHR™

Dr. Craven and his colleagues and staff have been carefully preparing for the transition. "Compulink's Guide to Implementing EHR has helped walk us through decisions about our paper charts, upgrading our IT infrastructure to accommodate EHR, and more" he says. "Their support throughout this process has helped us spread out the costs and will hopefully minimize any lost productivity."

Specialty Eye Care expects to "go live" with Ophthalmology Advantage/EHR within the next few months, following 6-8 weeks of training and offline practice to familiarize doctors and staff with the system. "From our own experience and what we've seen in other practices, we know that Compulink's software is extremely customizable. Not only does it work well for the ophthalmic practice, but it is flexible enough to meet the needs of each unique practice and subspecialist, whether they are in pediatrics, glaucoma, or laser surgery," Dr. Craven says. "As we move forward with Compulink, I'm confident that we've chosen an EHR partner who will help us realize the full potential of EHR to improve practice efficiencies and deliver better patient care."

Pearls for Your Journey

We'll share Dr. Craven's implementation experience with you in a few months' time. But for those just beginning the EHR journey, he has some pointers:

"Definitely visit other practices that are using the systems you are interested in. It's hard to find the time to do this, but seeing the software in action really inspired me and opened my eyes to the potential of EHR," he says. "For example, I've been impressed at how efficiently other practices can prepare documentation for the surgery center with Compulink."

He's also found that one has to be very careful about cost comparisons. "After researching several systems, I actually like the fact that Compulink charges a fee for annual support. You want your EHR vendor to keep improving their software and investing in your practice success."

Finally, he says, stay positive: "Change is always stressful. But I think as doctors, we have the responsibility to help our staff maintain a positive attitude as we all learn how to do things a little differently. We have to lead by example."

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