

Michael K. Tran, MD

An EHR & Practice Management Success Story

The Problem: Efficiently Manage an HMO-Based Practice

"More than 50% of my patients are insured by an HMO, a trend I see continuing at both the local and national level," says Michael K. Tran, MD, a solo practitioner in Orange County, Calif. "In fact, the requirements for doctors to justify the necessity and cost-effectiveness of our treatments will only increase," he maintains. A major challenge in treating managed care patients is the extensive documentation required to obtain pre-authorization for many procedures. "In the group practice I worked with previously, we had a full-time staff person dedicated just to gathering and submitting pre-authorization paperwork," says Dr. Tran. "It really adds to your overhead for a category of patients for whom the profit margins are already very tight."

The Solution: An Ophthalmology-Specific EHR Keeps Overhead Low Enough to be Profitable in Managed Care

When Dr. Tran launched his practice, he knew he needed an electronic health records (EHR) system to keep up with pre-authorizations and other demands of managed care. "The search for an EHR system that would be the right fit for me was one of the most important investments of both time and financial resources that I made in my practice," he says. His top priority was to find an ophthalmology-specific EHR system with screens that had the look and feel he wanted for his exams. "Not only did Compulink have that, but it is also almost infinitely customizable, so I don't have to fit into a 'cookie-cutter' mold," he says. "I also felt that Compulink was a stable business partner who could support my EHR needs over the long term, and that they offered good value for the price. After working with the system for 3 years, I think it's the best option in ophthalmology—at any price."

The Results: Documentation that Improves Patient Care and Meets HMO Requirements

"Compulink's Ophthalmology Advantage™ is the only way I'm able to efficiently create and communicate the documentation that insurers want to see," Dr. Tran says. His front-desk staff is able to cut and paste specific fields from the patient record right into the online pre-authorization form. "You shouldn't be documenting exams well just because an HMO tells you to," says Dr. Tran. "Compulink helps me do a better job documenting everything I want to about the patient's health status, relevant tests, and our discussion. It also means that I can respond to patient questions any time of the day, from wherever I am. I can quickly graph out trends in a patient's intraocular pressure or refraction over time, and I never lose important information because it is buried deep in the chart. All of these features contribute to better patient care. The fact that EHR also helps reduce my overhead expenses and run more efficiently is really an added bonus."

Pearls for Success

"Put at least as much energy into choosing an EHR system as you would into choosing a new diagnostic device," advises Dr. Tran. "The EHR system will affect every aspect of your practice, right down to how happy you and your staff are to come to work every day."

He suggests that physicians do their due diligence to find a system that fits their practice style and type. "Above all, make sure you are working with a stable company that will keep investing in its EHR software and its customers. You're going to be in this relationship for a long time," he says. And finally, Dr. Tran cautions against over-delegating when it comes to EHR implementation. "I think physicians need to be personally involved to make sure the electronic records accurately reflect the way they practice and the way they want to document exams," he says.

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