

Mountain View Eye Associates

An EHR & Practice Management Success Story

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The Problem: Cheaper System Proves to be a Costly Mistake

When Mountain View Eye Associates in Altoona, PA., transitioned to electronic health records (EHR) in 2009, they left Compulink's practice management software in favor of Eyefinity®/OfficeMate®. "We assumed that all practice management systems were basically equal," says partner Fred E. Petrunak, OD. "OfficeMate seemed to have a comprehensive EHR system, and we thought we'd save a lot of money with it." Unfortunately, that decision cost the practice \$15,000, months of hassle and lost productivity, and a year long delay in moving to EHR.

"It didn't take long for us to realize that many of the features we took for granted with Compulink were cumbersome or impossible with OfficeMate," says Dr. Petrunak. For example, a daily breakdown of charges and allocation of revenues by doctor that used to take a few minutes became an hour-long ordeal requiring manual calculations.

The doctors also found that Eyefinity's EHR software, ExamWriter®, was poorly organized clinically and lacked the detail they really wanted. "Had the problems only been with ExamWriter, we might have chalked it up to the challenges of EHR," says Dr. Petrunak. "But it was obvious to all of us that even routine administrative tasks like scheduling appointments and ordering glasses required many more steps than they had with Compulink. We were frustrated and our staff was ready to quit," he says.

The Solution: Return to a System that Supports our Clinical Process

After just a few weeks, Dr. Petrunak said they were all wondering what it would take to go back to Compulink. Two months later, that's exactly what they did, focusing first on getting practice management back on track, before jumping into EHR again. "One of the biggest problems with ExamWriter is that it is a totally separate program from OfficeMate - we actually had to exit out of one to use the other," says Dr. Petrunak. "That is completely impractical when you want to quickly check formulary coverage or the last spectacle purchase during an exam. With Compulink, everything is integrated, so we just toggle between tabs at the top of the screen," he says. As they draw closer to implementing EHR, the Compulink difference has become even clearer. "From that first trial exam in Eyecare Advantage, I breathed a sigh of relief—Compulink's EHR screens look like a real eye exam. They intuitively support the clinical process, rather than disrupting the flow of the exam the way ExamWriter did."

The Result: Practice Efficiency and Peace of Mind "We're back to spending our time on patient care rather than wrestling with an unwieldy computer system," says Dr. Petrunak. "We appreciate our investment in Compulink now. Sure, there are less expensive options, but we learned the hard way that the savings is absolutely not worth the cost in wasted time, frustration, and lost productivity." He and his partners said their prior experience with Compulink opened their eyes to how much less functionality they were getting from the cheaper system. "What you really need is a simple, comprehensive way to keep track of everything. Having had that in the past with Compulink, we just weren't willing to settle for anything less," he says.

Pearls for Success

"Don't assume that a system is good just because it is popular. And you have to do your homework, because the flaws of a system aren't readily apparent in a 20-minute sales presentation," says Dr. Petrunak. "We had blinders on because of the price difference, but had we spent more time playing with the system or watching others use it, we would never have chosen OfficeMate. Compulink is simple yet comprehensive, and clinically friendly, while Exam Writer/OfficeMate is complex, incredibly wordy, and inflexible regarding the needs of a multi-doctor practice."

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