

River Valley Therapy & Sports Medicine

An EHR & Practice Management Success Story

physical therapy
ADVANTAGE™

The Problem: Find an EHR and Practice Management System Geared for Therapists

When Gabe Freyaldenhoven, PT, opened the doors of his Russellville, AR, clinic in 2001, he had no idea how fast it would grow. "I started out with a billing system designed for physicians but we quickly outpaced its ability to handle the quirks of coding and billing for therapy," he says. Today, the practice has 6 physical and occupational therapists, an exercise physiologist, a business manager, an office manager, and 14 other staffers. One of their top priorities in replacing the billing system was to add scheduling and electronic health records (EHR). "Financially, EHR made sense to us. The increasing demands of insurance compliance and paperwork meant that we either needed an electronic system to double-check everything or we needed to hire more people," he says.

But finding the right system wasn't easy. "Our practitioners do everything from physical therapy for disabled 3-year-olds and teen athletes to workplace ergonomic evaluations to post-surgical therapy and stroke rehabilitation for older adults. Finding a system that was adaptable enough to handle so many different types of patients and diagnoses was a real challenge," Freyaldenhoven says.

The Solution: An EHR System that Molds to the Way We Practice

The ease of customization was the main reason River Valley Therapy chose Compulink's Physical Therapy Advantage™. "Even though we were looking at PT-specific systems, we wanted to be able to fine-tune them to really support our practice 'dialect' and natural flow, rather than be forced to mold our ways to the software," he says. "With Physical Therapy Advantage, the end user has phenomenal access to manipulate and customize pretty much anything. No other software on the PT market lets you do that."

One of the things Freyaldenhoven customized are the reports sent to local physicians, whose referrals generate the majority of the practice's patients. "It was critical to me that those referral sources continue to get the clear, concise, narrative reports they had been getting from us," he says. "Thanks to Compulink's ability to interface seamlessly with Crystal Reports, we can do that. All the other programs we saw could only generate a bulleted list of findings that wouldn't really make sense to an outside practitioner."

The Result: Far Greater Efficiency to Sustain Growing Practice "The savings—in not hiring another insurance clerk and in eliminating \$14,000 per year in dictations costs—has more than paid for the EHR system over time, he says. "But the greatest benefit is that automating so many repetitive manual functions has given us some breathing room. We're able to do more with the same staff, with much higher job satisfaction." For example, he says, the EHR system now tracks signed reports coming back from referring doctors, and reminds therapists when 30-day updates are due to insurance companies. "Chart audits take an hour instead of all day. Troubleshooting a billing problem might only take 10 minutes when all the information can quickly be accessed electronically rather than manually." Freyaldenhoven feels that he can more effectively supervise therapists, too. "As a business owner, I can run reports daily if I want, with just the touch of a button. That lets me raise concerns with a therapist or staff member in a much more timely fashion," he says.

Pearls for Success

Freyaldenhoven recommends that therapy practices look at a lot of different EHR and practice management programs before making any decisions. "If you just look at one or two, you really won't get an idea of what is out there," he says. And once the choice is made, you have to focus on the end goal, not the headaches of the transition. "It's kind of like going to PT school – it's hard while you're in the middle of it, but you'll always be glad you did it because of how it changes what is possible going forward," he says. "The benefits are exponential."