

## Spokane Internal Medicine Uses the Practice Partner® System to Improve Quality and Revenue

### At a Glance

#### Organization

Spokane Internal Medicine  
Spokane, Wash.

- 12-provider internal medicine practice
- More than 17,000 active patients

#### Solution Spotlight

- Practice Partner® Patient Records
- Practice Partner® Medical Billing
- Practice Partner® Appointment Scheduler

#### Critical Issues

- Incorporating quality of care improvements into daily workflow without overwhelming physicians
- Uploading data from third parties into the EHR
- Increasing efficiency and productivity
- Building an ancillary services group

#### Results

- Finished No. 1 among 154 regional practices in compliance with Premera Blue Cross chronic-care quality initiative
- Tested blood glucose levels of more than 87% of diabetic patients last year
- Successfully established a robust ancillary services group
- Reduced interface costs for receiving third-party data

Spokane Internal Medicine (SIM), an early adopter of electronic health record (EHR) technology, has made quality of care its hallmark. When payors began emphasizing disease management and preventive care, SIM had a built-in advantage — its Practice Partner® Patient Records EHR system from McKesson. The 12-provider internal medicine practice successfully customized the practice's EHR system to incorporate leading-edge disease management and prevention into daily workflow. The results have been significant. SIM ranked No. 1 among 154 local practices by a major payor (Premera) for chronic-care follow-up, earning SIM a \$25,000 bonus.

#### Challenges

SIM wanted to improve quality of care by introducing disease management and preventive care programs — without adding to physicians' workload. To accomplish this goal, the practice had to improve physician workflow and ensure seamless access to data from third parties.

"We wanted to build into our system the care management reminders that would keep us from missing things that we knew were important for our patients," explains Tom Carli, clinic administrator.

#### Answers

SIM customized the EHR system to incorporate disease management and preventive care into its daily operations. The system's unique health maintenance module, which allows SIM to incorporate care management reminders based on age, sex, disease condition, medications or other criteria, has been critical to the practice's success. SIM uses the health maintenance module to help manage care as patients are being seen by providers and as they interact with scheduling staff.

For example, during a visit with a diabetic patient, the Practice Partner Patient Records progress note template automatically imports the latest HbA1c report into the current note and automatically receives alerts indicating overdue procedures specific to diabetes. "Care management is built into our workflow — not an extra step that has to be remembered," says Carli.

SIM is also using the system's integrated billing and scheduling applications — Practice Partner® Medical Billing and Practice Partner® Appointment Scheduler. These applications make health maintenance reminders available to other staff members who have contact with patients. For instance, when a patient calls for an appointment, the scheduler is

# Case Study

**“Our providers can see a full load of patients – start at 8:30 a.m. and be out by 5:30 p.m. – and earn 40% to 45% higher than the mean income for internists.”**

**Tom Carli**

**Practice Administrator**

**Spokane Internal Medicine**

flagged for any overdue procedure and can schedule it while the patient is on the phone.

The health maintenance features in the Practice Partner system help SIM to proactively manage its patients on a population basis. Monthly reports listing all patients with overdue preventive care procedures are run for each provider. After review by the provider, postcards are sent to patients reminding them to schedule their annual physical or other overdue procedures.

With the Practice Partner system, SIM is assured that physicians have access to records for procedures performed outside the practice. A unique results delivery service managed by the Inland Northwest Health Service directs incoming reports such as labs and imaging to the appropriate section of the patient chart as well as to the physician's electronic review bin.

## Results

SIM's focus on quality has paid off. In a recent independent study conducted by a major payor in the region, the practice ranked No. 1 among 154 practices in chronic care management and received a \$25,000 bonus.

SIM's quality improvements show both in its disciplined approach to ensuring that specific tests are

routinely completed and in its management of patients according to clinically appropriate goals and objectives. For example, more than 87% of SIM's diabetic patients took an HbgA1c test last year, and of those patients, 76% were well-controlled, with HbgA1c levels of less than 7%.

SIM's efficient workflow and focus on preventive care has allowed it to build a robust ancillary services practice offering Dexa scans, advanced cardiovascular testing (including nuclear medicine, ultrasound and stress testing), and internal lab testing for disease management (such as HbgA1c testing). Providing these ancillary services has been a win-win situation: Patients receive improved care and convenient access to tests while the practice builds a strong revenue base.

SIM's efficient workflow has also allowed it to create a culture that balances the personal and work life for physicians — without compromising their income potential. “Our providers can see a full load of patients – start at 8:30 a.m. and be out by 5:30 p.m. – and earn 40% to 45% higher than the mean income for internists,” relays Carli.

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