



How to Leverage Technology to See More Patients

The Efficiencies of Healthcare
Information Technology

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The Efficiencies of Healthcare Information Technology

In recent years, the number of doctors and medical practices that have adapted their offices to utilize healthcare information technology (IT) has grown significantly. By implementing electronic health records (EHR) and Internet patient portals, many physicians have discovered numerous benefits, and most directly, the streamlining of office administrative procedures. The gains in efficiency have led to a number of tangible improvements, including the ability of doctors to attract, retain and see more patients than when paper records and traditional methods of practice-patient interaction had been in place.

Shortening Patient Office Visits Using EHR and Patient Portals

One of the greatest frustrations of patients, doctors and medical staffers alike is the amount of time and resources each patient office visit takes in relation to the time the patient spends with the doctor. By

improving administrative efficiency, each visit can be shortened while improving care. Shorter visits mean more patients can be seen each day.

The ways in which medical office efficiency can be improved through the adoption of electronic health records and Web-based patient portals are numerous and significant.

- Patients can perform the registration process using the patient portal application on their own time, before they come to the office. No more paper forms to fill out that will have to be filed away or converted to a digital format by an office staffer.
- The electronic format means that complete patient medical records can be retrieved, reviewed and amended from anywhere, at any time, by anyone with proper authorization, providing huge cost savings. The time that used to be spent by an office staffer pulling and organizing records before and after each patient visit can now be spent on other tasks.

Efficiency Improvements by Streamlining Communications

There are also additional efficiencies gained by improving communications, both with patients and with other medical entities. This can save time directly, which can be allocated to seeing more patients. Practices that have adopted medical IT methods have reported improved patient flow

averaging around four additional patients per physician per week, depending on specialty.

Among the potential communications benefits are:

- The patient portal system allows patients to schedule their own appointments, which can dramatically cut down on office phone traffic. Many adopters of medical IT report office phone volume declining by 20-30%.
- Questions and reminders about minor issues—both administrative and medical (checking and rescheduling appointment times, requesting prescription refills, reporting test results, etc.) can all be handled electronically, cutting patient “phone tag” to a minimum and in some cases can eliminate the need for minor, office-clogging appointments that cramp efficiency.
- Efficiency improvements are not limited to patient relationships. “Medical to medical” communications benefits, such as the ordering of tests and diagnostic images, sharing of patient records between medical offices, and message tracking between staff members and practices all lead to significant time saving.
- The insurance filing process, notoriously time-consuming in the medical profession, can be streamlined through the adoption of an integrated EMR system.

A Benefit to Be Reaped: Efficiencies Lead to More Patients

Adopting EMR and patient portals means a vast streamlining of the administrative aspects of a medical practice. The bottom line is that less time spent by the practice dealing with procedural matters, either by allowing the patients to perform these tasks themselves (patient portals) or by trimming the amount of time the office staff needs to fulfill these responsibilities (EMR), allows a physician to spend more of their time treating patients. And that means treating more patients.



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