

Sage Intergy EHR | Success Story

Diamontoni & Associates

Creating Uniformity with Sage Intergy

● CHALLENGE

To upgrade to a practice and clinical management system that could handle changes in the industry, including legislation and national interoperability.

● SOLUTION

To implement the Sage Intergy suite of solutions across all 8 locations and create uniform processes.

● RESULTS

A new level of consistency and access to information has significantly improved documentation and coding which has resulted in improved care and increased revenue.

SPECIALTY

Family Practice

LOCATION

Pennsylvania

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS

Six Practices, Two Physical Therapy Offices

NUMBER OF USERS

120

SOLUTIONS USED

Sage Intergy

Sage Intergy EHR

Sage Practice Analytics

PhoneTree

Time to Implement a Fully Integrated Practice and Clinical Management Solution

Many medical practices have existing practice management systems that they utilize for basic scheduling and billing, which were implemented 10 or even 20 years ago. These systems are generally character-based and rarely offer advanced functionality such as integrated electronic health records (EHR). Often, they are only minimally supported or the support has disappeared all together because new, more advanced systems have taken their place, or the company has closed or been acquired by another vendor.

For practices using this type of technology there will inevitably be a time when they are faced with the need to look at a new system. Changes in the healthcare industry such as the National Provider Identifier (NPI) and the promotion, at the federal level, of national healthcare interoperability are forcing practices to recognize the need for change.

One such practice is Diamontoni and Associates, a family practice that has been serving patients in Lancaster for 20 years. With six practice locations, two physical therapy locations and 120 users working on a practice management system that was 15 years old, they had reached the point where it was time for a change. "We saw what was coming down the pike in terms of legislation, national interoperability, etc., and we realized that it was time to make some changes and implement a fully integrated practice and clinical management solution to support those changes," explains Lisa Carrigan, billing manager. "We had come to the life end of our existing practice management system and we saw an opportunity to implement new solutions that would help us create more uniformity in our business and improve coding, communication and patient care while also enabling us to effectively meet some of the changes and challenges to come."

Creating a Uniformity of Process and Procedure with the Sage Intergy Suite

For Diamontoni there was a desire to find a reliable company as much as there was a desire to find the right product. After an exhaustive RFP process and extensive research into many different solutions, Diamontoni found that the right combination for them was Sage and their Sage Intergy suite of practice and clinical management solutions. "We choose Sage Intergy because it not only offered the features and functionality we were looking for, but it was also supported by a company that we felt we could rely on," recalls Carrigan.

The result of this choice has been a system that provides a wide array of solutions for Diamontoni's financial, administrative and clinical needs. With Sage Intergy and Sage Intergy EHR in place, they have been able to create the uniformity of process and procedure they were hoping for and they have streamlined workflow and efficiency to see the charge capture, billing and patient care improvements they were also hoping for. Beyond that, Carrigan also believes that, "We are still learning and implementing new solutions as they become available to us so we expect to see ongoing improvements in efficiency."

Uniformity may seem like a strange choice of words to represent the focus on improving efficiency, but it is clear in looking at the practice that creating uniformity is, for them, the thing that has brought great benefit. Whether they are looking at promoting certain practices in coding within the practice or looking at being able to comply with national standards that may appear in the future, the ability to create consistency within and communicate throughout the community, the region or the state is something they see as crucial.

"There were several things I liked about Sage Intergy," says William Vollmer, M.D. "I had set some parameters in my mind. We knew we

should have a system that could transfer information on a regional or national basis. So, one of those parameters was a system that used a recognized knowledge base that could be interoperable on a national level. Sage Intergy uses Medcin® which addressed that need. We also wanted a single system for all areas of the practice—EHR, billing, scheduling, ePrescribing—so everyone would be learning a single solution, working with a single vendor, and utilizing a single database for all the data.”

Multiple Solutions in One Integrated System

If consistency is what you are looking for, then multiple vendors is definitely not the answer. According to Dr. Vollmer it didn't take long to figure that out. “We viewed a lot of different systems. We went to AMA conferences to get information on EHR and we investigated all the options. Some of the systems I looked at had more than one vendor. That was just not an option for me in terms of support. It is too complicated and difficult. Some of the other companies weren't getting rave reviews. Sage's stability was a factor. The general gestalt of the company and the way they approach things was a piece of it. And, the many solutions available in an integrated system was a piece as well. Some systems we saw were nothing more than glorified word processors. We needed a lot more than that and we are using everything that is available to us with Sage Intergy.”

Everything includes a lot. From appointment scheduling to comprehensive electronic encounter documentation, health management and clinical ad-hoc reporting, they are doing it all at least a little bit. And, they are using a wide range of hardware to do it. They may have been looking for uniformity but they got that along with a great amount of flexibility. While the system has a consistent look and feel and promotes streamlining all areas of the practice, users can access it from PCs, handheld devices, tablet computers or via the Internet from home or the hospital.

Accuracy in Coding - A Huge Benefit

One of the biggest changes and benefits that has resulted from this combination of consistency and flexibility has been a significant improvement in coding. With no hesitation, Carrigan is quick to point out that “our physicians were historically undercoders.” Dr. Vollmer readily admits that this was true. “We were definitely undercoding. A perfect example of this was the fact that every time anyone here saw someone with a cold, we only saw it as a cold and we coded it as a cold. We generally coded it as a two or sometimes a three. We weren't taking into account the varying factors of something such as a person with diabetes or another chronic condition who has a cold. That should be a three or a four. Now the system does that for us. At the same time, it won't let you overcode either. You use the E&M calculator and it lets you know. It will prompt you to ask other things if there are areas where you are missing. The result has been a huge improvement in accuracy and coding.” Carrigan says the even more impressive result is an increase in revenue.

Coding is just one piece in a large puzzle of uniform processes—right in between documentation and billing. A combination of electronic encounter documentation, health management, ePrescribing and lab tools has resulted in the ability to create consistent processes with results that are fully documented in the patient record. “There are no open questions anymore,” explains Dr. Vollmer. “Everything is documented the same way and in the same place. If we need to know something, you just look it up and there it is. Either we did it and it is in there or we didn't do it. If you look at our old notes, the new electronic EHR notes are far more complete and accurate. We can track guidelines for care and patient responses to treatment. If we chose to do something like pursue pay for performance, it would all be there so we could do that.”

Disseminating Information Faster and More Effectively to Improve Patients' Care

From the billing side, Carrigan has had the same positive experience with creating more consistency and seeing better documentation and easier access. “Hands down the billing functionality of Sage Intergy is better than any other system I have seen,” she says. “The way the system scrubs the claims before they get out the door, it won't let it out unless it's clean and then we can track any claim all the way through until it is paid. It's just beautiful.”

Tying all the pieces together and creating uniformity in communication throughout the practice is the Clinical Workflow Manager, which provides tools to manage messages and tasks. The system allows staff to receive and address tasks such as prescription refills or lab results quickly. It also enables the entire staff to route patients through their encounters efficiently. “The nurse is alerted to the patient waiting, then the nurse enters the vitals and the doctor is alerted that the patient is waiting, the exam is completed and the patient is released back to front desk where the follow up information for scheduling appointments and check out is ready and waiting,” says Carrigan. “Information is disseminated faster and more effectively and it improves the care the patients receive.”

Diamontoni found what it needed in Sage Intergy, and they continue to add new tools to support the creation of consistent processes the support both the staff and the patients. The latest tool is PhoneTree® automated patient reminders. The staff used to spend three hours a day calling patients with reminders and there were still no shows. Now the calls are automated and the no shows have been reduced. “We aren't looking to do a lot of growing at this time,” says Dr. Vollmer. “We are just focused on making our practice as efficient as it can be and preparing for whatever is to come. Sage Intergy is allowing us to shift our resources and create a more effective office with what we have. However, if we did want to grow and expand, we could use this system to add another practice and it would be really easy to do with all the consistency and processes all ready in place.”