

CUSTOMER SUCCESS



Plaza Gastroenterology

Taking the First Steps with Intergy by Sage

With endless talk of electronic health records (EHR) and HIPAA, it is easy to forget that there are many practices that are still not using electronic solutions of any kind. Facing new legislation and addressing reimbursement challenges is forcing many smaller practices to look at automation for the first time—a potentially overwhelming prospect.

Crystal McIntosh works for just such a practice. As the administrator for Plaza Gastroenterology in Kansas City, she was faced with figuring out how to make this huge change effectively. The practice had grown to four providers at two sites, but their billing was completely outsourced, the scheduling was done in a book and most of the staff had no experience with computers.

With 19 years of medical practice management experience, McIntosh knew what she was looking for. “I wanted an easy-to-use, Windows®-based system with extensive billing and collections features,” she explains. “We didn’t have control of our billing and it was affecting our cash flow, we needed to make a change.” After looking closely at eight different systems, she found what she was looking for in Intergy by Sage.

McIntosh met with her sales representative several times to make sure this was the right choice and to begin making a plan on how the practice would automate. She decided to start with the base practice management system and get the staff comfortable and then begin to move towards an integrated EHR with the goal of eventually being paperless.

Of course, it seemed like the biggest hurdle would be getting the staff acclimated to using an electronic system instead of doing everything by hand. It turned out this was not a problem at all. “The staff actually found it pretty easy to make the change,” recalls McIntosh. “Everyone picked up on it quickly and I was glad I chose this system. It is probably the best investment we have made in our practice.” With the staff on board and having no trouble adjusting, significant enhancements in scheduling and billing were quickly becoming apparent.

Before Intergy, managing schedules for two offices was often frustrating for the staff and the patients. If a patient called and needed to be scheduled at the other location, they were put on hold while the staff called the other office and tried to find the right appointment for that patient.

Customer:

Plaza Gastroenterology

Specialty:

Gastroenterology

Location:

Missouri

Number of Locations: Two

Number of Employees:

Five Physicians, Six Staff

Products:

- Intergy

CHALLENGE

Change from a paper-based system to an automated system. Bring billing (previously outsourced) in-house. Help staff with little or no computer experience to adjust to automation.

SOLUTION

Intergy offered an easy-to-use, Windows-based system with extensive billing and collections features. The system’s ease of use meant the staff had no trouble adjusting.

RESULTS

Reduction in the cost of billing from 8% to 3-4%; Increase in revenue in first 2 years of 68%; Only 2.5 support staff for each provider; Have added another provider without adding support staff; Payment turnaround as low as 7-10 days; 96-98% of claims are clean when submitted.

Now, no matter which office the patient calls, they can be easily scheduled into the right appointment slot for their needs regardless of location without being put on hold or called back. "Patients noticed the difference in the scheduling right away and that continued for the first few months, but now they just expect that efficiency," says McIntosh.

While the scheduling enhancements are great, it was the billing and collections piece that McIntosh was really looking forward to. "The outsourcing was not working for us," she says. "If we needed information, we would have to call and wait. If patients had questions, they would call us and then we would call the billing service and wait." Billing is a completely different experience with integrated electronic claims, patient statements, and eligibility that have resulted in faster turnaround and increased cash flow.

The combination of using eligibility verification for payers like Medicare and submitting claims electronically has had a huge impact on Plaza Gastro's bottom line. "It was costing us about eight percent to use the billing service and I would say it is now costing us about three to four percent, so we're saving there," McIntosh says. "In addition, we didn't hire more staff. It is so easy that two of us are managing the billing while still doing other duties. It probably equals one full time billing person. We are managing to run this practice with six staff supporting four physicians when the national average for gastro is five support staff to one doctor. That is profitable!"

A lot of factors contribute to the ease with which McIntosh and her staff are able to manage the billing and collections. From being able to add comments to patient statements to getting error reports before submitting claims, there are many features of Intergy that have enabled Plaza Gastro to address potential problems before they come up. As a result, the end of the month reports show an average of 96-98% clean claims and a payment turnaround that can be as short as 7-10 days.

With these and other billing and collection improvements, Plaza saw an increase in revenue of 68% in the first two years of using Intergy.

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"We are getting more checks, bigger checks and have a more consistent cash flow than we did before," says McIntosh.

After talking to McIntosh, it is clear there is so much more in the base system that has helped improve efficiency at Plaza Gastro. Reporting tools are making it easier for them to manage referring physician relationships. The staff can respond quickly to patient inquiries for appointments and billing. McIntosh can run financial reports in seconds so the providers can see the shape of the practice at a glance. She could go on and on, and this is clearly just the beginning.

"There is definitely a plan to keep growing in the future," McIntosh says. "We have already added another provider without adding any new billing staff." It's obvious that the staff are happy, the physicians are happy and McIntosh is itching to take the next step.

ABOUT SAGE SOFTWARE

Sage Software Healthcare Division is a part of Sage Software, the North American business of UK-based The Sage Group plc. Sage Software supports the needs, dreams and challenges of small and medium-size businesses (including medical practices of 500 employees and more) by offering leading business management, practice management and electronic health records products and services. More than 2.6 million North American small and medium-sized businesses and tens of thousands of medical practices currently rely on Sage Software applications.

For more than 25 years, Sage Software Healthcare Division has delivered easy-to-use, scalable and customizable software for practice management, including private practices, multi-million dollar medical enterprises and community health centers. Our Intergy EHR by Sage electronic health records software is CCHIT CertifiedSM for its product, and meets CCHIT ambulatory electronic health record (EHR) criteria for 2006.

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