

# ORTHOPEDICS NORTHWEST IMPROVES PATIENT CARE, **BOOSTS EFFICIENCY**, AND REDUCES OVERHEAD



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—Chuck Stillwaggon, Practice Administrator  
Orthopedics Northwest, PLLC  
Yakima, Washington

## CHALLENGE

- Replace inefficient, labor-intensive paper-based process
- Reduce \$150,000 in annual transcription costs
- Create comprehensive patient documentation

## SOLUTION

- Speech-enable NextGen® EHR with Dragon® Medical Practice Edition

## RESULTS

- \$75,000 reduction in transcription costs
- 3% reduction in overhead
- 11% increase in complex patient (Level 4) in six-months
- Faster turnaround times

## SUMMARY

With nine physicians and seven mid-level providers serving 280,000 patients, Orthopedics Northwest, PLLC is central Washington State's most comprehensive provider of orthopedics and sports medicine.

Recognized by the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) for superior performance in Profitability and Cost Management in 2010 and in 2011, Orthopedics Northwest is committed to using technology to improve patient care, boost efficiency, and reduce overhead. The practice installed NextGen EHR, which provides checklists to ensure thorough documentation for billing and ARRA compliance.

As clinicians began to use the EHR, they realized they also needed to document part of each patient visit in their own words, to make the notes more meaningful to other clinicians. The practice decided to adopt Dragon Medical Practice Edition to help clinicians create complete, comprehensive, real-time patient notes within the EHR.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of NextGen and Dragon Medical Practice Edition was handled by one of Nuance's value-added resellers. They helped customize EHR templates and documents and developed speech commands to streamline provider efficiency.

The reseller rolled the solution out to three or four providers at a time, giving early adopters plenty of time with trainers. These earlier adopters acted as super-users for the next wave of clinicians.

## ACCELERATING ADOPTION

Dragon Medical Practice Edition helped speed EHR adoption. Chuck Stillwaggon, Practice Administrator, says, "With Dragon Medical, it takes users just three weeks total to become fully productive. If we had continued to use the EHR without Dragon Medical, we would have had to cut back on a full schedule by 5%. Dragon Medical is an absolute necessity with an EHR," he continued.

## BETTER COMMUNICATION WITH REFERRINGS

Speech-enabling the EHR allows clinicians to dictate medical decision-making aspects of the note, including more comprehensive history of current conditions and more detailed assessments and plans. According to Dr. Richard D. Roux, a physician at Orthopedics Northwest, "With Dragon Medical Practice Edition, I can generate a referral note that's concise and sounds like me. A number of referring physicians have told me they really like the notes I create with Dragon Medical Practice Edition."

## HIGHER REVENUES, FASTER CASH FLOW

Easier documentation means more thorough documentation – and higher revenues. "Previously, we coded primarily at Level 2 and Level 3 because that was safe," said Stillwaggon.

*"With Dragon Medical Practice Edition and the EHR, we can generate the code that truly reflects the work we do for complex patients. Our Level 4 encounters increased from 3% to 14% over a six month period."*

—Chuck Stillwaggon, Practice Administrator  
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Quicker turnaround time allows three-day sooner charge submission to insurance companies, improving cash flow. More thorough documentation has reduced insurance denials.

## LOWER TRANSCRIPTION AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Transcription costs decreased 50%, delivering a three-month ROI. Additionally, the practice added three clinicians without additional billing personnel. Without speech recognition, the practice would have needed 1.5 more billing personnel costing \$59,360. Overhead has dropped from 46% to 43%.