

RHEUMATOLOGY CONSULTANTS IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND **RESPONSIVENESS** TO REFERRING PHYSICIANS

Rheumatology Consultants

"Dragon Medical Practice Edition makes our practice's communication more efficient because I get my output on the spot."

—Dr. Steven J. Klein
Rheumatology Consultants
Hagerstown and Cumberland, Maryland

CHALLENGE

- Replace an inefficient process and prepare the practice for the adoption of an EMR

SOLUTION

- Use Dragon Medical Practice Edition to create accurate real-time patient notes

RESULTS

- Dragon Medical Practice Edition is now used by one physician and one physician's assistant to create high quality documentation unique to each patient encounter. Physicians, staff, and providers now have instant access to documentation, rather than having to wait one to two weeks. Referring physicians are pleased with the quality of the notes they receive from Rheumatology Consultants immediately following a patient visit.

SUMMARY

The private practice of Dr. Steven J. Klein, Rheumatology Consultants, is the sole provider of rheumatologic and comprehensive osteoporosis care in Western Maryland, with offices in Hagerstown and Cumberland. The practice draws patients from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Since 1995, the practice has been at the forefront of rheumatologic research and care, having participated in numerous Phase II and Phase III clinical trials.

Rheumatology Consultants recently decided to deploy real-time speech recognition to improve clinical workflow. As a result, the practice has enhanced efficiency and responsiveness to referring physicians. Dr. Klein and the practice's physician's assistant are now both using Dragon® Medical Practice Edition to complete their documentation.

A DESIRE TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

When Rheumatology Consultants first considered speech recognition technology, it was looking to improve clinical documentation efficiency. "We were recording dictations and

sending them to a transcriptionist. It took a week to two weeks to get back our transcriptions, which was really inefficient,” recalls John Weikert, RT, who is in charge of IT for the practice. “We wanted to speed turnaround time.”

Additionally, Dr. Klein hopes to implement an electronic medical record solution in the near future and wanted to smooth the transition to the new system by installing speech recognition. As Dr. Klein explains, “We had heard about the difficulties other physicians have had obtaining comprehensive notes from an EMR. We felt that speech recognition would improve the quality of the notes. Since we didn’t want to learn two systems at once, we decided to start with a speech recognition solution that could work with multiple EMRs.”

IMPLEMENTATION

After seeing a demonstration of Dragon Medical 10.1 at an annual meeting at the American College of Rheumatology, Dr. Klein was convinced that Dragon Medical could help him meet his goals of improving turnaround time for his notes and improving the efficiency of his practice. Weikert installed the software, which was a straightforward process.

The practice then turned to one of Nuance’s Value Added Resellers (VAR) to customize the product and train Dr. Klein. Scalese created 16 templates for different types of exams as well as macros to speed data entry using Dragon Medical. For example, when the doctor calls up a certain template, the macros automatically populate the patient’s name and medical chart number.

“Using the templates and macros to insert information speeds documentation quite a bit,” says Devin Traynor, PA-C.

GETTING UP TO SPEED

Next, Dr. Klein was trained to use Dragon Medical 10.1 and introduced to the commands and how to speak into the system to optimize recognition. “My advice is to find a Value Added Reseller to work with,” says Weikert. “The VAR that worked with me created a binder for us with cheat sheets of most frequently used commands and more. It was nice to have that support when we needed it.”

The practice recently upgraded to Dragon Medical Practice Edition and the doctor was trained on the new version as well. This version of Dragon Medical requires less training than previous ones.

“With Dragon Medical Practice Edition, I no longer need to have the physicians teach the system their voices by reading special scripts,” the VAR states. “I simply have them use the product in a clinical setting. We start at a slow-to-moderate pace. After 10 minutes, we go to half speed. After another 10 minutes, we go to three quarters speed. After an hour, the physician can speak at full speed and it’s very accurate.”

Rheumatology Consultants were very pleased with the support they received. “The VAR we work with is fantastic,” Dr. Klein says. “He brings value to anyone who uses a product like this. He told me the right way to correct things and instilled a lot of confidence. He’s a fantastic educator and supporter and delivered on everything he promised. He’s a very valuable asset.”

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY

The biggest benefit Rheumatology Consultants has achieved from Dragon Medical Practice Edition has been rapid turnaround for exam notes. Rather than having to wait one to two weeks, the notes come back instantly.

“Dragon Medical Practice Edition makes our practice’s communication more efficient because I get my output on the spot,” Dr. Klein says. “If I need to get a report to another doctor quickly, there’s no faster option.”

Traynor concurs, “If a patient or doctor calls, we can get them the information they need instantly rather than making them wait a week. It’s good for other doctors or the hospital to have the notes right away.”

Weikert adds, “Within the practice, having an instantly transcribed note in the chart means that our doctors, practitioners, and staff can see immediately what the doctor did or plans to do. It’s convenient. If you have to wait a week, the patient might return before the note is in the chart and the provider would have to take the time to call the provider who last saw the patient and ask about their findings.”

SIMPLIFY USE OF AN EMR

While the practice has yet to implement an EMR, installing Dragon Medical Practice Edition has allowed them to prepare for the eventual adoption, which will further improve efficiency. “An EMR has the potential to make my life even easier and more efficient,” says Dr. Klein. “Other people will be able to enter parts of the patient’s medical history, and the EMR will generate much of the note in an automated fashion.

Dragon Medical Practice Edition will complement the EMR by allowing me to pick up the mike and dictate my customized assessment and plan to generate a meaningful note. Since most of the exam would already be documented, it will take me two minutes to dictate the note.”

IMPROVE COMPREHENSIVENESS

Notes are more comprehensive with Dragon Medical. As Dr. Klein explains, “I have become more comprehensive with Dragon Medical Practice Edition. When you’re dictating to a transcription service, you have to

consider the cost of their time. When there are no costs other than paper, it’s easier to be more detail oriented.”

FEWER ERRORS

Accuracy has improved. “I can review my output on my computer screen and I know what the note will look like when I print it,” says Dr. Klein. “I don’t have to worry about any errors from a transcriptionist. That’s a win.”

SATISFIED REFERRING PHYSICIANS

The fast turnaround time has also improved satisfaction from referring and other physicians. “Doctors are pleased with this more rapid communication—I know I’m always pleased and impressed when I get good, timely communication from other doctors,” says Dr. Klein.

IMPLEMENTING NEW FEATURES

The practice has only recently implemented Dragon Medical Practice Edition and is looking forward to deploying some of its advanced features. In particular, they plan to store the voice files the practitioners generate on a server, rather than on local machines. Central storage of these files will allow practitioners to share their profiles over the network rather than having to copy them onto each individual machine, which will make it easier to use Dragon Medical Practice Edition in its two offices. “It’ll be nice to have a single file that’s updated centrally,” notes Weikert.

HIGHLIGHTS

- One physician and one mid-level practitioner currently use Dragon Medical Practice Edition
- Reduces turnaround time for transcriptions from one to two weeks to minutes
- Encourages more comprehensive and accurate notes
- Is helping the practice prepare for the future adoption of an EMR
- Other doctors, staff, and practitioners can now instantly access comprehensive notes