

TYLER NEPHROLOGY ASSOCIATES SAVES **\$150,000** PER YEAR



"Dragon Medical Practice Edition works hand-in-hand with the EHR, allowing us to use it to the fullest and work the way we want to."

—Dr. Alpesh Jethva, MD
Tyler Nephrology Associates
Tyler, TX

CHALLENGE

Transition to a new EHR system and retain the high quality documentation enabled through transcription while eliminating up to \$150,000 in annual transcription costs.

SOLUTION

Speech-enable the EHR by coupling Dragon Medical Practice Edition with Acumen EHR in order to create complete, real-time patient notes.

RESULTS

Dragon Medical Practice Edition within Acumen EHR is now used by 11 physicians and two advanced practitioners to create high-quality documentation unique to each patient encounter. Significant annual cost savings will include up to \$150,000 of transcription expenses. The ability to dictate notes within Dragon Medical Practice Edition has simplified the physicians' transition to their new EHR solution and allows the practice to take full advantage of the new EHR to improve patient care.

TYLER NEPHROLOGY USES DRAGON MEDICAL PRACTICE EDITION WITH ACUMEN EHR TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE WHILE REDUCING COSTS

Formed in 1974, Tyler Nephrology Associates has 12 physicians and three midlevel providers that deliver care for chronic kidney disease and kidney failure to patients in East Texas. Tyler Nephrology opened its first outpatient chronic dialysis unit in 1978 and now has 12 outpatient dialysis centers serving more than 700 patients with kidney failure. Tyler Nephrology also teamed with the East Texas Medical Center to open the only kidney transplant program in East Texas.

Tyler Nephrology recently deployed "front-end" real-time speech recognition with its new Acumen EHR™ electronic health record (EHR) to improve clinical workflow. Currently, 11 physicians and two mid-level providers are using Dragon® Medical Practice Edition to complete their documentation within Acumen EHR. Using Dragon Medical Practice Edition, the practice has simplified its transition to its EHR, which allows it to improve patient care, while dramatically reducing transcription costs.

EASING THE TRANSITION TO EHR

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, Medicare put in place numerous incentives to encourage healthcare providers to adopt Electronic Medical Records. Because Tyler Nephrology has a large percentage of Medicare patients, the practice implemented an EHR system. Even more importantly, they recognized that EHR technology would improve patient care by making it simpler for physicians to access patient records anytime, anywhere and to share them with all the providers within—and ultimately outside—their practice.

However, the high cost of installing an EHR meant that the practice would need to reduce costs elsewhere. Transcription was a tremendous budget line-item ripe for the trimming. Yet the physicians weren't willing to give up the convenience and comprehensive notes that transcription provided. "We were using in-house transcribers, which was a large ongoing expense," explained Linda Miller, Administrator for the practice. "We needed to reduce these transcription costs while easing the physicians' transition to the EHR."

After visiting another practice using the Acumen EHR with Dragon Medical Practice Edition, the physicians saw that Dragon Medical Practice Edition's speech recognition would allow them to continue to document their exams in the manner with which they were accustomed (e.g. by speaking and not typing) with the same high quality while dramatically reducing transcription costs.

EXPERT CONSULTING

The practice turned to a Nuance value added reseller based in Salado, Texas to get up and running on Dragon Medical Practice Edition. The reseller trained the physicians to use Dragon Medical Practice Edition and installed the clinicians' roaming profiles on a single server to ensure the physicians could use their Dragon Medical Practice Edition profiles on multiple computers. She worked individually with each physician to teach them how to use and train Dragon Medical Practice Edition, as well as how to set up macros and templates that would allow them to work faster. Each physician had two training sessions, an initial introduction and a follow-up one month later to address any issues that arose.

"The reseller we worked with presented the training in a very clear and thorough manner," said Dr. Jim Cotton. "She introduced the basics of the system and took us through a series of dictations. Her training showed us how Dragon Medical Practice Edition works and how to maximize its accuracy. I'm now in my second month of using the system, and my workflow is going smoothly."

GETTING UP TO SPEED

Dr. Alpesh Jethva recalled the ramp-up period as being substantially shorter than he originally expected. "I initially thought that I would have to speak like a robot and that it would take a lot of my time. But Dragon Medical Practice Edition is very straightforward. After utilizing the software Accuracy Center to train the program, Dragon Medical Practice Edition was able to understand and transcribe my dictations with much more accuracy. I am now able to speak more naturally, with just a few modifications, compared to the way that I previously dictated before our EHR implementation. It works even

better than I was expecting.”

SIMPLIFYING THE TRANSITION TO AN EHR

Prior to adopting its Acumen EHR and using Dragon Medical Practice Edition, the practice had been very pleased with the efficiency of the system it used for creating notes. The practice had developed a series of templates that described histories and many types of physical exams. To document their exams, physicians would dictate exactly how they wanted one of the practice’s four in-house transcribers to modify the template, as well as dictate any unique exchanges with patients that were not templated. In-house transcribers then completed the note.

With the move to the new EHR, the practice wanted to maintain the high quality of its documentation and the ease-of-use for physicians while digitizing the documentation process to reduce costs. Today, physicians use drop down menus and templates within the EHR where appropriate, and dictate using Dragon Medical Practice Edition where they need to elaborate using free form text. “I dictate the present illness and my treatment plan in narrative form because those are unique to the patient and require more detailed documentation,” explained Dr. Cotton. “Using Dragon Medical Practice Edition keeps our notes the same high quality as they were before.”

Dr. Jethva elaborated: “The problem with some EHR templates is that they don’t provide much useful information or are so unorganized that it makes the useful clinical information difficult to locate. We have a lot of free-form text boxes that we fill using Dragon Medical Practice Edition rather than typing. Dragon Medical Practice Edition lets us say exactly what we want to say, and our workflow is pretty much the same as before.”

The bottom line? “It would have been much more difficult to transition to the EHR without Dragon Medical Practice Edition,” says Miller.

IMPROVING PATIENT CARE

The Acumen EHR is already enhancing patient care in many ways. Among its many benefits, the use of the EHR helps all the physicians in the practice examine and treat patients in a more consistent manner. It gives the physicians comprehensive information about patients at their finger tips, whether they’re in the office, at home, or at the hospital. E-Prescribing improves patient safety by eliminating handwriting issues, while providing drug interaction and other alerts.

Dragon Medical Practice Edition has enhanced the physicians’ experience using the EHR. As Dr. Jethva explained, “Dragon Medical Practice Edition works hand-in-hand with the EHR, allowing us to use it to the fullest and work the way we want to.”

COST SAVINGS

Dragon Medical Practice Edition has also fulfilled its initial purpose of reducing costs substantially. “I estimate that it will save our practice between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year,” said Miller, a return on investment of just two months. “I had 4.2 FTEs doing transcriptions. We have been able to move two long time transcriptionists into other positions created from the EHR implementation.”

CONCLUSION

Overall, said Miller, “I would definitely recommend Dragon Medical Practice Edition. It’s been a good alternative to the way we completed our documentation in the past. Miller cautions that providers need to understand that Dragon Medical Practice Edition will succeed ONLY if they are willing to dedicate the time to train the program on the front end.”

HIGHLIGHTS

- 11 physicians and two advanced practitioners use Dragon Medical Practice Edition with Acumen EHR
- \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually in annual transcription expenses will be eliminated
- Reduced transcriber headcount by 1.2 FTEs; redeployed two full time transcriber to other tasks
- Rather than producing canned notes, Dragon Medical Practice Edition lets physicians create thorough documentation unique to each patient encounter
- Return on investment in Dragon Medical Practice Edition software of less than two months
- The ability to continue to dictate notes has simplified the physician's transition to the new EHR
- Dragon Medical Practice Edition allows the practice to take full advantage of its new EHR to improve patient care