Bay Area Heart Center leverages Centricity Practice Solution to manage the increasing workload of a growing cardiology practice.

Bay Area Heart Center (BAHC) is leveraging technology to help manage its fast-growing cardiology practice – without adding staff. Using Centricity Practice Solution from GE Healthcare, BAHC has streamlined its clinical and administrative processes to save resources, accelerate reimbursement, and gather data to help them with their reporting requirements.

**NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Qualified for $528,000 in federal funding as a result of attesting for Meaningful Use.
- Integrated lab results and imaging data into the clinical workflow, giving physicians faster access to data and reducing the wait time for results by four to five days.
- Reduced reimbursement turnaround time to less than 14 days with customized encounter forms and A/R queues.
- Eliminated two FTEs by moving from manual to electronic charge capture.
Tackling the challenges of a growing practice

In the heart of St. Petersburg, Florida, is a cardiology specialty practice that has seen a lot of growth in recent years. In 2002, BAHC had just seven physicians and two clinics; today, 12 physicians see patients in four full-time clinics across the region. BAHC implemented GE Healthcare’s Centricity Practice Solution, an integrated EMR and Practice Management solution, in 2004 to handle all administrative and clinical aspects of the business across its clinic locations. The system has helped them to efficiently manage the increasing patient volume and associated workload over the years. However, BAHC wanted to exploit the full potential of the system to further streamline the clinical workflow, accelerate charge capture, and reduce reimbursement turnaround time – without adding office staff.

In addition, with new federal programs like SO210 and Meaningful Use, BAHC looked to GE Healthcare and Centricity Practice Solution to help them prepare for these additional administrative challenges. With an eye on cost control, their goal was to manage the escalating demands using only their current resources.

In November 2011, BAHC upgraded to Centricity Practice Solution 10, and took advantage of the system’s flexibility to customize their encounter forms, deploy new workflow tools, and access predefined reports. This allowed the organization to meet the specific needs of its cardiology practice, while also making it easy to pull the data needed using only their current resources.

Flexible encounter forms let physicians practice medicine their way

Through Centricity Practice Solution, BAHC has the ability to create encounter forms that align to their physicians’ workflow, while also capturing critical measures needed to attest for Meaningful Use. According to Sandy Collier, Director of Operations at BAHC, “The beauty of the system is that you can create forms that allow physicians to document whatever data is required – right within the system, and that final report overlays on the preliminary report

Integrating data from external systems accelerates the workflow

BAHC has further streamlined the clinical workflow by integrating data from other systems such as PACS images, lab results and charges directly into Centricity Practice Solution.

For example, when a patient needs an echocardiogram, the information is entered in Centricity Practice Solution and appears in the ultrasound technician’s schedule on the PACS system. The ultrasound technician fills out the preliminary form for the doctor, and sends a message back to Centricity Practice Solution that the preliminary report is waiting for the doctor’s review. This alerts the doctor to take action right away, helping to reduce delays in the process. The physician reads and signs the study on the PACS system, and that final report overlays on the preliminary report within Centricity Practice Solution. This seamless process eases the physicians’ workflow, and gets results back to the patient sooner. In fact, BAHC estimates its wait time was cut from five to seven days down to just 24-48 hours.

Modern practice management tools help BAHC do more with less

From an administrative perspective, BAHC has leveraged Centricity Practice Solution to streamline charge capture and reduce time to payment. Within BAHC clinics, the doctor sees a patient and enters the orders as part of the encounter workflow. The charges are captured and verified, and the claim is sent to the insurance carrier the next day. Using flexible, customizable billing queues to manage accounts receivable, BAHC has improved the billing workflow and accelerated the revenue cycle without hiring additional staff. What’s more, BAHC’s typical reimbursement turnaround time is just 7-14 days.

In addition, Centricity Practice Solution has enabled BAHC to use electronic charge capture when their doctors are in the hospital: “This is a big deal because, traditionally, charges are done manually – with all the paperwork and delays typical of a manual process,” says Collier. Today, BAHC doctors use iPhones to capture charges. The charges are sent to a web interface, where billing staff approves them, and sends out the claim within three days. Doing this electronically versus manually, BAHC has been able to eliminate two FTEs.

BAHC is continually seeking ways to do more with its current resources. One way is by improving the way they communicate with patients. Using secure messaging through the patient portal in Centricity Practice Management, BAHC staff can respond to patient inquiries while working on other tasks, allowing them to be more responsive to patients, and more productive in their work.

Quality reports help BAHC prepare to attest for Meaningful Use

BAHC is a member of the Medical Quality Improvement Consortium (MQIC) from GE Healthcare, a database of nearly 30 million consolidated, de-identified patient records. The information captured by BAHC through their customized encounter forms is automatically uploaded to MQIC, aggregated with data from other organizations in the consortium, and made instantly accessible through ready-made and customizable reports. This makes it easy for BAHC to do benchmarking and quality reporting for programs such as PQRS and eHR. In addition, it has enabled BAHC to generate reports on their selected measures as they attest for Meaningful Use. BAHC received $44,000 per physician in federal funding – a total of $528,000.

About Bay Area Heart Center (BAHC)

BAHC delivers high-quality cardiac care to patients in the St. Petersburg, Florida region. The practice is comprised of 12 cardiologists and three physician extenders specializing in all aspects of modern cardiology, including diagnostic and therapeutic areas such as cardiac catheterization, interventional cardiology, peripheral vascular, and pacemaker therapy. BAHC operates three full-time clinics and a diagnostic facility, and sees nearly 33,000 patients each year.

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Director of Operations

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About GE Healthcare

GE Healthcare provides transformational medical technologies and services that are shaping a new age of patient care. Our broad expertise in medical imaging and information technologies, medical diagnostics, patient monitoring systems, drug discovery, biopharmaceutical manufacturing technologies, performance improvement and performance solutions services help our customers to deliver better care to more people around the world at a lower cost. In addition, we partner with healthcare leaders, striving to leverage the global policy change necessary to implement a successful shift to sustainable healthcare systems.

Our “healthymagination” vision for the future invites the world to join us on our journey as we continuously develop innovations focused on reducing costs, increasing access and improving quality around the world. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, GE Healthcare is a unit of General Electric Company [NYSE: GE]. Worldwide, GE Healthcare employees are committed to serving healthcare professionals and their patients in more than 100 countries. For more information about GE Healthcare, visit our website at www.gehealthcare.com.

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