

Case Study *Adoption Equals RESULTS*

Despite recognition of the high cost of paper records and the resulting widespread interest in electronic health records (EHRs), many physicians across the country are still reluctant to adopt EHRs due to concerns over changes in workload, expenses and rumors of slim returns.

The fears are unwarranted with the right EHR in place—a fact to which Tri-Cities healthcare community in central Washington can attest. Tri-Cities uses the NetPractice family of web-based applications to electronically share administrative and clinical information between providers. They receive, act on and manage a patient-centric electronic record of results, reports, referrals and consults for a fraction of the cost normally associated with building a community-wide health information network.

In 2002 healthcare organizations in the Tri-Cities of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco, Wash., banded together to realize the community-wide benefits of electronic exchange of healthcare data. Instead of implementing separate solutions, they chose NetPracticeRESULTS™, which gives the nearly 125 participating providers in the Tri-Cities access to all needed local healthcare information in one place through interfaces with a local hospital; six laboratories (hospital-based, regional and national); two radiology groups; and almost 100 area pharmacies.

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*—Rand Wortman
CEO, Kadlec Medical Center*

NetPracticeRESULTS allows providers to securely receive electronic lab results, radiology reports, ADT messages and face sheets, and transcribed reports. Providers can review these reports, forward them to their front desk to notify and/or schedule the patients, and even forward the report to other providers in the form of a referral or consult report, along with other chart components. When one of their patients is admitted to the hospital or emergency room, clinics and providers are notified so they can schedule patient follow-up care. NetPracticeRESULTS also provides a messaging and routing system for medical staff and providers.

kadlec medical center

Kadlec Medical Center, a leading hospital in the Tri-Cities, spearheaded the move to EHR by sponsoring NetPracticeRESULTS for its staff and community providers. **“Part of our successful growth as a regional medical center can be traced to making it easier for providers to practice at Kadlec than elsewhere,”** said Rand Wortman, Kadlec CEO. “NetPracticeRESULTS is one of the important pieces allowing Kadlec to accomplish this.”

Kadlec Medical Center has long advocated for electronic automation. Believing EHRs are the wave of the future, the hospital started to drive adoption of hospital-based delivery and viewing systems in 1998. After an evolution of four different versions from two different vendors, Kadlec was twice as successful as the national average with about 10% of its staff providers using these applications—which was an achievement at the time. Nevertheless, the majority of providers were reluctant to use the applications because they could only receive results for Kadlec Medical Center, which represented only a part of their business.

In October 2002, however, Kadlec signed on with Noteworthy’s NetPracticeRESULTS; **after little more than a year nearly 85% of Kadlec providers were using the web-based application.** The difference? Unlike previous efforts, NetPracticeRESULTS delivers results from other community labs, radiology groups, transcriptionists and other community hospitals, giving participating providers a complete view of the patient report history rather than a limited view from just one facility. Physicians can use the result viewing capabilities alone or seamlessly upgrade into the full EHR, NetPracticeEHRweb™.

In addition, emergency room physicians can quickly access clinical records and patient charts. This saves time, money and even lives since ER clinicians and staff do not need to waste critical time calling clinic providers out of a patient encounter (or out of bed at night) to get needed medication lists, allergies or other crucial patient history items.

For Kadlec Medical Center the successful implementation highlighted NetPracticeRESULTS’ unique advantage over other EHRs, “NetPracticeRESULTS is delivering what others don’t—a product that a significant number of providers are actually using,” said David Roach, COO of Kadlec Medical Center.

interpath labs & tri-cities radiology

The addition of two major independent laboratories, Interpath Laboratories and Tri-Cities laboratories, further increased provider interest in NetPracticeRESULTS. These laboratories—recognizing the benefits of working with just one vendor to reach a critical mass of area physicians—not only created interfaces with NetPracticeRESULTS to make their data available, but actively sponsored licenses for area physicians and their staff. Wanting to provide faster and more reliable delivery of orders and results, Interpath Laboratories extended the service to more than 75 providers, and Tri-Cities Laboratory works with more than 150 providers now using NetPracticeRESULTS. In response to their offer, providers throughout eastern Washington and northeast Oregon are now using NetPracticeRESULTS.

“We wanted to provide referring doctors with electronic access to their reports rather than having to fax or send hard copies,” said Lynn Ball, administrator at Tri-Cities Radiology. Paul Christensen, general manager of Tri-Cities Laboratories, agreed. “The more we can eliminate paper, the more efficient it gets. With NetPracticeRESULTS, we don’t have to print a piece of paper and deliver it, which is the main benefit.” Both Tri-Cities Laboratories and Interpath Laboratories are most impressed by the number of providers using NetPracticeRESULTS. “NetPracticeRESULTS has been very successful in getting offices to actually use the technology,” said Christensen. Tom Kennedy, Interpath’s president, agreed: “We were pleasantly surprised at how fast NetPracticeEHRweb was being adopted by so many of our clients. That made it easy to recommend NetPracticeRESULTS for our clients who want electronic results, but aren’t quite ready for the full EHR. This upgrade benefit was a major factor in our decision.”

For Tri-Cities providers, the advantages of electronic access over paper are crystal clear. With NetPracticeRESULTS, they are realizing faster delivery and handling of lab, radiology and transcribed reports at greatly reduced costs. The use of NetPracticeRESULTS has reduced the need for calls from clinics for additional copies of reports, and has resulted in almost instant referrals and consult-reports between referring and consulting providers. Providers report time savings and an increase in productivity since adopting NetPracticeEHRweb, as patient charts do not need to be located and pulled each time reports or transactions need to be added. The convenience of a web-based system is significant for busy physicians and clinic staff. With NetPracticeEHRweb, they now have complete access to their clinical EHR functions from within their clinic, the hospital and even from home.

mid-columbia medical associates

Some Tri-Cities physicians have upgraded to the full NetPracticeEHRweb, allowing them access to additional features including a complete medication/refill/allergy system, problem lists, social/family/surgical and diagnostic procedure histories, templated encounters and integration with voice recognition, macros and handwriting recognition. Users report not only **significant cost savings, but a reduction in stress levels** and the ability to enjoy the practice of medicine again. David Strutz is the director of Mid-Columbia Medical Associates, a nephrology and infection disease clinic in Kennewick, Wash. Strutz indicated one of the major process issues at their clinic was the extra time it took to pull non-scheduled patient charts to attach reports or send consultation reports. The reports would need to be approved, faxed and re-filed with the chart. This occurred about 35 times per day at \$3.87 per pull, or \$135.45 per day per provider. “We were at a point where we either had to hire another FTE or make the leap into the world of EHR. We took the leap—saving the FTE and implementing a better process,” said Strutz. “**With NetPracticeEHRweb, we received improved processes, time savings, budget savings, improved customer service, better organized medical records and a staff with less stress. Not only did we not have to add the additional staff position, we were able to add a fifth provider while keeping the same support staff.**”

richland family medicine

Dr. Gene Wong, a family practice provider in Richland, Wash., started with an EHR through another company, but switched to NetPracticeEHRweb because it offered more. In particular, NetPracticeEHRweb provided the interfaced labs, radiology reports and other interfaced information his (and other) EHR products offered but never produced. When asked what NetPracticeEHRweb does for his office, Wong said, “**Because of the way NetPracticeEHRweb automatically interfaces test results into our workflow, we have been able to add an additional provider without any additional support staff and we are more in control of our patient information than ever.** NetPracticeEHRweb also allows me to access patient information from the hospital or my home when I am on call.”

In other markets, national statistics show less than stellar adoption and retention rates for EHRs (40-50% of providers have tried EHRs, while only an estimated 4-7% are actually using them). However, NetPracticeEHRweb was adopted by more than 40% of Tri-Cities providers within the first year. Further, every group that started with NetPracticeEHRweb is still using the product—a **100% retention rate.** ■