

Performance Strategies



Connecting Physicians to Improve Community Care

Vol. 1, Issue 2, 2007

Connect Your Physician Community with the Right Solution



*By Tom Leonard, Senior VP and General Manager
Ambulatory Solutions
McKesson Provider Technologies*

Physician adoption of information technology remains a critical issue for the healthcare industry. Even with industry forces like consumerism and pay-for-performance, the rate of EHR adoption in the physician office has only reached 18% – a gap we must bridge quickly if we are to continue to make improvements in the care we deliver within our communities.

How can we as an industry achieve broad-scale EHR adoption and utilization? The relaxation of Stark rules created an opportunity for hospitals to leverage information technology (IT) to drive closer physician relationships. Hospitals have invested heavily in clinical and financial systems, as well as in people to build, run and deploy them, so they are well positioned to assist in the extension of EHRs to the practice.

In a rapidly changing environment, hospitals can play an active role in connecting physician members of the healthcare community by supporting their efforts to deploy EHRs and drive safer, more efficient patient care. There are a number of different models emerging that leverage the hospital's position as the hub of the local community of providers.

The two customers featured in this issue, MUSC and Oconee, have each found innovative ways to support physicians in their community by delivering enabling technologies to drive safer, more connected care. Their success began with an understanding of their physician community and a clear focus on their organizational goals.

Bridging the Adoption Gap

How can hospitals help bridge the adoption gap? The most effective strategy is to create the right technology and service solution for the right physician practices. It involves leveraging the hospital's IT infrastructure to automate physician practices clinically and administratively, connect them to the hospital, and help them improve financial performance.

Developing the right solution involves knowing your unique physician base as well as understanding their unique needs. Communities have different mixes of hospital-employed and affiliated physicians, and a range of specialties and referral relationships

Strategic or Hospital-Employed Physicians: These physicians are high referrers, with practices closely aligned to the hospital. Critical needs for them include:

- Fully integrated electronic health records that follow doctors throughout the health system
- Access to medical images in real time – anytime, anywhere across the health system
- Practice management systems for efficient office operations
- Revenue management solutions to improve financial performance
- Connectivity with the referral and hospital network.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Connect Your Physician Community with the Right Solution (Cont.)

Affiliated Physicians: These physicians have different needs. Integration to the hospital is less critical, or in some cases, undesirable. Automation for them focuses on throughput to see the number of patients needed to support the practice. Critical needs for them include:

- EHRs to help document patient care
- Efficient practice management systems to streamline practice and billing
- Help managing the revenue cycle and secure connectivity to the referral network

Finding the Right Solution that Improves Care and Performance

Healthcare is a community-driven model of care. However, no single solution will work for every community. The right solution will provide all the components needed by employed and affiliated physician practices – electronic medical records, practice management systems, billing services – along with a network to connect them with the key stakeholders in the care delivery process. It will support the unique ways healthcare is delivered within the community. And it will achieve the organization's goals or mission by balancing budget considerations, the hospital's preferred role, and the local competitive environment.

Finally, it means working with the right partner to help navigate the many decisions and available options as you engage with the physician community to deliver high quality, safer care in a financially responsible manner. Are you ready?

Tom Leonard is senior vice president and general manager of Ambulatory Solutions for McKesson Provider Technologies. He is responsible for three solution lines: Physician Practice Solutions, Extended Care Solutions and Revenue Management Solutions. Tom has more than 17 years executive, business development and operations experience.

Poll Finds Availability of EHR and Online Patient Services Would Influence Physician Selection

A Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Poll of more than 2,600 U.S. adults conducted in September 2006 found that a physician's use of healthcare information technology would influence their choice of a physician a great deal or to some extent.

Respondents indicated they are interested in accessing electronic health records (EHR) and other online means for communicating and transferring medical information. More than half of the respondents said whether or not a physician provides these services would influence their decision in selecting a healthcare provider.

- More than 70% of the respondents indicated they would like to communicate with their physicians via e-mail, receive reminders of needed visits or medical care, and use the Web to schedule their visits.
- More than 60% want to receive test results via e-mail and capture their medical information in an EHR.
- At the same time, the survey showed that roughly three-quarters of patients are not currently receiving these online services.
- Respondents also believe an EHR can significantly reduce the cost of healthcare (60%), improve the quality of care (68%) and reduce medical errors (55%).

Respondents said the availability of these services would influence their choice of a physician a great deal or to some extent for e-mail communications (62%) and for availability of an EHR (54%). [Review the poll results.](#)

RelayHealth provides [secure online communication services](#), including online consultations, bill management, schedule requests and results delivery. webVisits® consultations are reimbursed by payors such as Aetna, Blue Shield of California, Cigna and ConnectiCare.

Related Solutions

[Horizon Ambulatory Care™](#)

[Horizon Practice Plus™](#)

[Horizon Practice Complete™](#)

[Horizon^{WP®}Physician Portal](#)

[Practice Partner®](#)

[Practice Partner Complete](#)

[Revenue Management Solutions](#)

[RelayHealth Connectivity Solutions](#)

[Connecting PhysiciansSM Program](#)