

Performance Strategies



Increase Physician Alignment Using IT Benefits

Vol. 3, Issue 6, 2009

Methodist Peoria Leverages IT to Get and Keep Physicians on the Payroll



By Michael Bryant, CEO
Methodist Medical Center of Illinois
Peoria, Ill.



Going Against the Grain

During the late 1990s, many hospitals retreated from campaigns to employ physicians as the model started to fall out of favor. At [Methodist Medical Center of Illinois](#), in Peoria, we decided that the best way to align physicians with our hospital was to keep them on the payroll.

Certainly, employing physicians makes sense in our market, where one major employer – Caterpillar – is looking to access healthcare services for its employees through a strong integrated network. And with tough economic conditions, rising malpractice costs and physicians' desire to improve their quality of life, employment is once again an attractive option for physicians.

At Methodist, we have always held that employing physicians is the best way to align physicians with our hospital's goals and mission. As a result, the focus of our physician alignment efforts has been to make it more attractive to be a Methodist employee than work for an independent medical practice or as a solo practitioner.

Playing the IT Card

How do we position Methodist as a desirable employer? With information technology — advanced solutions that can help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of patient care.

To start, offering access to information technology such as [electronic health records](#), [computerized physician order entry](#) and e-prescribing helps to attract technologically savvy young physicians to our hospital. These doctors, who have grown up on technology, are not only comfortable with these systems, but they expect to use them in their work lives.

Information technology also helps to align physicians with our overall goal of efficiently providing the best care to our patients. With a large number of employed doctors, physician leaders at our hospital can work closely with our clinical staff to truly maximize the benefits inherent in IT, as we strive to meet our clinical and financial goals.

As a result, our employed physicians have become advanced users of McKesson's integrated electronic health record system — the [clinical suite of solutions on the inpatient side](#) and the [ambulatory solution on the outpatient side](#). In addition, we have achieved 100% adoption of its [computerized physician order entry](#) solution.

Even as we employ more physicians, we also work with affiliated groups to create closer ties to the hospital. For example, with one large orthopedic group, we developed an interface between its ambulatory EHR and McKesson's [surgical scheduling solution](#). The group can easily pass data to the hospital, making it much simpler to schedule surgeries. In addition, our [results distribution service](#) enables us to electronically distribute hospital results to physician practices, both owned and non-owned.

Getting Ready for More

As the delivery of medical care evolves, we expect our commitment to helping physicians use information technology to become even more important. For example, as consumers demand more convenient access to services, connectivity solutions will become even more important.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

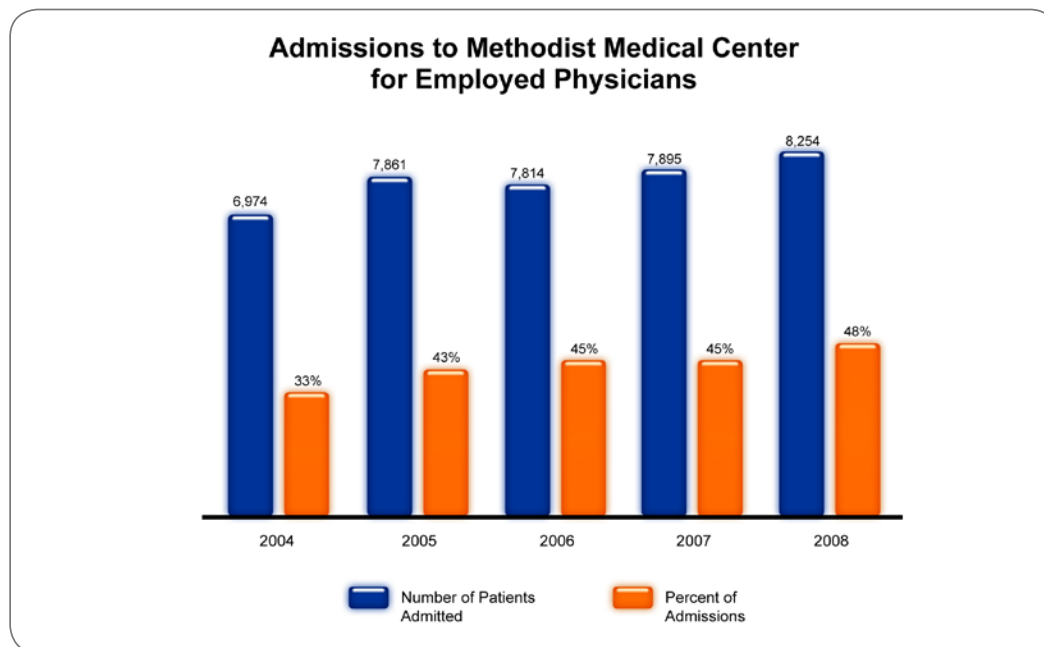
Methodist Peoria Leverages IT to Get and Keep Physicians on the Payroll (Cont.)

The ability to communicate online with patients, for instance, is becoming a “must have” for physicians. Already, some of our doctors are taking advantage of the ability to [conduct reimbursable “e-visits” with patients](#) — a practice that can meet consumers’ demands for increased convenience, improved care and reduced costs.

With IT acting as a magnet, we have moved from employing about 90 primary care doctors to employing more than 100 doctors from a variety of specialties over the past decade. Admissions from employed physicians have grown from about 33% in 2004 to about 66% in 2008. Remarkably, we have been able to achieve this growth without requiring physicians to admit their patients to our facility, but instead by forging a closer alliance with them by improving patient care.

We expect our investment in IT to drive even closer alignment in the future as healthcare reform is rolled out. Providing physicians with the ability to quickly embrace advanced IT that assists them with regulatory compliance and protects reimbursement will support our physician alignment efforts. Fortunately as a hospital, we are in the position to offer doctors access to emerging technologies that they might not be able to afford on their own.

Michael Bryant is President & CEO of Methodist Health Services Corporation in Peoria, Ill. Since July 1999, he has led an integrated health system anchored by Methodist Medical Center, a 353-bed regional tertiary hospital complemented by a network of 90 employed physicians in 32 regional sites, as well as a Provider Health Organization for managed care products. He also hosts the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria (UICOMP) Family Medicine Residency site, and provides rotations in several subspecialty services. Bryant graduated from Indiana University in 1978 with a degree in business administration and a concentration in Accounting. He went on to achieve his CPA and began his career in Chicago with Peat Marwick and Mitchell, now KPMG. While in Chicago, he received his MBA from the University of Chicago and began a career in Healthcare Administration.



The percent of admissions to Methodist from employed physicians has increased significantly over the past five years. The numbers do not include skilled nursing facility admissions.

Related Solutions

[Horizon Ambulatory Care™](#)

[Horizon Clinicals® Inpatient EHR](#)

[Horizon Expert Orders™](#)

[Horizon Surgical Manager™](#)

[RelayHealth Results Distribution Service](#)

[RelayHealth webVisit®](#)

Learn More

[Advisory Board: Incentive Design for Employed Physician Practices](#)

[Health IT Policy Committee: Meaningful Use Matrix](#)

[McKesson Comments on Initial Meaningful Use Definition](#)

[CCHIT Issues Concise Guide to Certification Criteria](#)

[Microsoft HealthVault and RelayHealth Connects Doctors and Patients](#)