

Ear Nose and Throat Specialty Practice Attests to Meaningful Use



All eligible professionals at a St. Louis Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialty practice quickly attest to Meaningful Use of Centricity Practice Solution and earn the maximum incentives.

Summary

Sound Health Services, P.C. is the largest privately-owned ENT, audiology and allergy practice in the St. Louis, Missouri Metro area with eight offices. In the summer of 2011, Sound Health Services upgraded to the ONC-certified EMR module of Centricity Practice Solution. By year's end, all 14 eligible professionals successfully met the Stage 1 Meaningful Use requirements. Along with attentive support from GE Healthcare, the practice found that the EMR's design facilitated their preparation, reporting, and attestation processes.

- Careful planning and an adaptable EMR helped Sound Health to streamline clinical operations while avoiding unwanted changes in specialists' workflows.
- Pre-built Meaningful Use reporting tools helped physicians track progress and were easy to use.
- GE Healthcare consultants provided valuable support throughout the EMR upgrade process.

Case Highlights

Situation:

- Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialty seeking to attest to Meaningful Use
- 17 physicians
- Eight locations in St. Louis, Missouri

Results:

- \$252,000 incentive dollars received
- 100% of EPs attested
- Six months from go-live to attestation



Meaningful Use and the clinical need for integrated records drove EMR adoption

In 2009, physicians at Sound Health Services, a large Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) practice in St. Louis, Missouri, knew the time was right for an electronic medical record (EMR), both to streamline clinical operations and to take advantage of upcoming incentives offered under Medicare. The practice selected the EMR functionality in Centricity Practice Solution from GE Healthcare and implemented it during the summer of 2010.

Sound Health had been pleased with the Practice Management (PM) portion of Centricity Practice Solution since 2004 and added the EMR Module to replace paper-based records and earlier-generation EMRs at all five of its divisions. Staying with GE Healthcare technology enabled the practice to transition to a fully integrated EMR/PM solution with minimal clinician and staff training. "We wanted integrated medical records so that charts would be available throughout the organization for any patient seen in any office," recalls Allen Mackley, Sound Health Executive Director and CEO. "Our physicians saw the advantages of the EMR, and they knew they would need to attest to Meaningful Use, both to take full advantage of the incentives while they were available, and to avoid Medicare penalties later. We wanted to be ahead of the game."

To ensure the EMR functionality was optimized for Sound Health's providers, the implementation team evaluated workflows within the divisions and tailored EMR forms and office visit templates to fit each division's requirements. After reflecting on the benefits of the approach, Mackley advises, "Review your work processes." Adopting an EMR was an opportunity not only to attest to Meaningful Use but to also help streamline clinical operations.

"Ancillary Services now has everything at our fingertips when we see patients," Mackley explains. "We can efficiently send reports back to the referring physician, and nothing is lost in translation."

"The pre-built Meaningful Use reports are very easy to use and easy to read. They include an explanation of the individual measure at the top so you know exactly what you're looking for. They capture data we enter in the system to help us determine whether or not a physician is meeting the requirements or is exempt. Everything you need is there."

Jacquie Jennewein
Administrative Supervisor
Sound Health Services

With proper planning and a flexible EMR, attestation required no unwanted changes to specialists' workflows

With providers across the practice effectively using the new EMR, Sound Health leadership sharpened their focus on Meaningful Use. Patience and planning were essential to their successful attestation. A core team of Mackley, Administrative Supervisor Jacquie Jennewein, and Becky Akers, a Division Practice Manager, met at least weekly starting in March 2011. Preparations included:

- Thoroughly researching the Meaningful Use process and requirements.
- Meeting with division managers, physicians and staff to explain the process, the data to be collected, and its importance.
- Choosing measures for attestation that fit the physicians' specialty.
- Upgrading to an ONC-certified version of Centricity Practice Solution during the summer of 2011.
- Adjusting EMR forms and office visit templates to capture information needed for attestation.

"Outline, plan, read a lot," Mackley recommends. Though the practice experienced some inevitable trial and error along the way, ultimately the flexibility of the software enabled the specialists to attest to Meaningful Use Stage 1 requirements without unwanted changes in the way they practice medicine.

Pre-built Meaningful Use reports simplified attestation planning

Among the 17 physicians on board at the time, all except three pediatric ENTs qualified for attestation under Medicare. To check on progress, the core team periodically ran the pre-built Meaningful Use reports provided with the system. "If the reports showed that certain requirements were not being met, we would go back and analyze what the physician was doing in the flow of the patient from check-in to check-out and see what was missing and why," says Mackley. "Seeing in black and white where measures were being met gave us confidence that we would be successful."

Jennewein adds, "The pre-built Meaningful Use reports are very easy to use and easy to read. They include an explanation of the individual measure at the top so you know exactly what you're looking for. They capture data we enter in the system to help us determine whether or not a physician is meeting the requirements or is exempt. Everything you need is there."

During implementation the team configured Centricity Practice Solution to collect the data necessary to meet the Meaningful Use measures selected by Sound Health. To help ensure that all needed information was gathered for each office visit, the Sound Health team developed a practice-wide Meaningful Use summary checklist of basic tasks for use by physicians and medical assistants. As a result, missing items are automatically flagged in the checklist through customization of the system. Jennewein observes, "We don't have to think about adjusting the system anymore - it just takes care of itself."

“Having access to someone who knew how the EMR product worked and how everything tied together was a big help. Our GE Healthcare clinical consultant was extremely supportive.”

Allen Mackley
Executive Director and CEO
Sound Health Services

Attentive GE Healthcare support inspired confidence throughout the process

Sound Health had confidence in its ability to prepare for attestation based on positive experiences with the PM functionality and related product support. While the attestation process was new both to Sound Health and GE Healthcare, Mackley observes that the organizations worked as partners to explore questions and overcome challenges.

During planning and through their Meaningful Use reporting period, GE Healthcare lent software assistance as needed. “Having access to someone who knew how the EMR product worked and how everything tied together was a big help,” says Mackley. “Our GE Healthcare clinical consultant was extremely supportive.”

Looking back, the Sound Health leaders emphasized the importance of a strong team in pursuing Meaningful Use attestation. “I couldn’t have done it without Jacquie and Becky,” Mackley observes, “and we couldn’t have done it without our GE clinical consultant.”

Success in Stage 1 and a Bright Future

Following a three month reporting period from October to December 2011, Sound Health officially attested in early January 2012:

- All 14 eligible professionals attested just six months after transitioning to the ONC-certified EMR.
- The practice promptly received \$252,000, representing the maximum \$18,000 incentive per provider

The next milestone on the horizon for Meaningful Use starts in January 2014. “When we do Stage 2 reporting, we already will have been recording information for almost three years,” says Mackley. With so much time to gain additional Stage 1 and EMR experience, Mackley is confident Sound Health’s advanced preparations leave the specialty practice well-prepared for the future.

About Sound Health Services

Sound Health Services, P.C. is the largest privately owned ENT, audiology and allergy practice in the St. Louis, Missouri Metro area with eight offices. The practice now has 18 physicians, and the most recent addition has already commenced the Meaningful Use reporting period. The practice offers state-of-the-art treatments for ear, nose and throat problems, hearing loss, environmental allergies and sinus issues. It also provides hearing aid products, head and neck surgery, dizziness and balance assessments, and treatment for sleep disorders and snoring.

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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