EMR-Elite

Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Goes Paperless; Electronic Medical Records Improve Patient Care

Oral and maxillofacial surgery practices throughout the United States are rapidly implementing electronic medical records to increase office efficiency and as part of a continued commitment to improve patient care. Doctors find that electronic medical records reduce the time needed for managing paper and instead allow them to focus more on the patient. Needed records, notes and images are all available at their fingertips.

With a well-planned implementation strategy, the transition to a system such as EMR-Elite for CS WinOMS practice management software can be swift, efficient and easily adopted by a diverse set of stakeholders.

Practice Profile
Customer
Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
Product
EMR-Elite from Carestream Dental
Business Need
Switching from paper to EMR
Solution
EMR-Elite for CS WinOMS software
The Right Time for Change
Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery stands out for its 2011 launch of a successful implementation strategy for EMR-Elite across two of its 10 practices serving the Austin, TX, area.

Representing a group of 13 board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeons, Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery provides a full scope of OMS services to patients, including wisdom teeth removal, dental implants and orthognathic surgery. Some doctors also work with patients on sleep apnea treatments; facial injuries related to accidents; and the removal of tumors and cysts of the jaw.

Through 2010, Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery remained heavily dependent on paper to track patient records, from the front desk to the various operatories. With the opening of another office planned in a new facility, the management determined the time was right to begin migrating from cumbersome paper charts to electronic medical records.

The new office would serve as a test bed for EMR rollout that then could be replicated across other locations. The end result of the transition would lead to improved daily workflow and enhanced access to patient data. It would also allow Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery to present itself as a state-of-the-art practice to patients.
Steps to Success: Pre-planning

After researching potential options, Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery chose Carestream Dental's EMR-Elite solution for CS WinOMS software. EMR-Elite streamlines the multiple ways in which practice professionals capture patient medical records and facilitates the transition to a chartless practice. This comprehensive software allows oral surgery practices to manage anesthesia records; document cases and progress notes; maintain medical histories; record consent; and plan treatment.

Just like any new technology or system, migrating from paper to electronic medical records benefits from planning. Practice Manager Ruth Whitehurst launched the initiative by engaging a consultant, Sarah Leath with Right Eye Consulting, and by working with Howie Nobel, a customer trainer with Carestream Dental.

In late 2010, Whitehurst established a two-month training schedule. The goal was to introduce the entire Georgetown office team to EMR-Elite and begin to consider how the system would be incorporated into the workflow. Leath facilitated a preliminary review of the existing workflows and discussion regarding process improvements. Nobel provided “how to” training on each EMR-Elite component to ensure optimal implementation.

Engaging the Right Stakeholders

In addition to Whitehurst, the Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery implementation team included both leadership and office-based team members. Their expertise included office, financial and clinical operations as well as the WinOMS specialist.

EMR-Elite is designed so that each practice can customize its system for its own needs and workflows. As the team began to explore the software and how it would be used for their own daily processes, Whitehurst arranged for weekly conference calls during which her team could engage Leath and Nobel to discuss any questions and issues, as well as potential resolutions.

“This helped give the whole team plenty of time to adjust, troubleshoot and form good habits,” Leath said. “The diversity of the roles on the team also helped identify how different employees across the practice might best use EMR-Elite to streamline elements of their daily work.”

I always advise taking small steps. You don’t have to implement everything within a month. My suggestion is that practices schedule between one and three months of planning, then trials of EMR-Elite ranging from a day to a week. Some of the preparation doesn’t even involve EMR-Elite, but utilization of what’s already in place.

- Sarah Leath, Right Eye Consulting
Rollout and Implementation

Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery decided to begin using EMR-Elite in controlled stages. This allowed the implementation team time to ensure that the kinks were worked out in advance of introduction to the entire team. A team member and a doctor tested each module before it went live; issues were resolved before they could become roadblocks to adoption or affect patient satisfaction.

Whitehurst entered the implementation process with a plan for each location. With the first facility up and running successfully, she was able to work out initial stumbling blocks, then move on to the next facility.

The most important component of a successful EMR implementation is planning and preparation. This includes setting goals, training and setting up ‘infrastructure’ within the EMR. Using the software is the easy part. The success of the EMR implementation is 20% the system you choose and 80% what you do with it.

- Ruth Whitehurst, Practice Manager

Whitehurst understood that team empowerment would drive success; she used the training facility model to drive efficiency. Following the preparations and the testing, it was essential to get buy-in from everyone within the office: the doctors and office team had to be comfortable with what they were doing in order for patient care to not be affected.

Education for everyone was key to a smooth transition. The primary location was leveraged as a training facility for the subsequent rollout. Key team members were trained as EMR specialists, and they became the go-to experts for the rest of the team and were charged with ensuring the system ran smoothly.

“The biggest benefit is in improved patient experience, because we look more up to date with state-of-the-art technology, and we have saved time compared to before the switch,” Whitehurst said. “But our primary motivation wasn’t saving time. We certainly save time checking for charts and treatment charge entry, but it’s invaluable to have patient information available at your fingertips. And by going paperless with EMR-Elite, we have clean desks, and that promotes a sense of calm.”

Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery benefitted from detailed pre-planning combined with regular, clear communication with Carestream Dental and Right Eye Consulting. Additionally, contingencies and flexibility in the process helped speed adoption of EMR-Elite within the offices. By having a meticulous plan for a multi-location rollout, Austin Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery’s vision of paperless offices was achieved with overwhelming success.

Treat the patient, and stop chasing paper. For more information, call 800.944.6365 or visit www.carestreamdental.com.