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**Rachel Simpson, Office Manager**  
**Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates**  
**New London, CT**

## **WRS Gives Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates Peace of Mind**

What do customized templates for bipolar disorder, drug alerts for Vyvanse®’s potential for drug-drug interactions and automatic patient appointment reminders have in common? These are just a few of WRS EMR capabilities that are helping Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates’ extensive roster of providers chart quickly and easily, manage patients’ medications, mitigate risk and increase office efficiency.

Founded in New London, CT 25 years ago by Dr. Bassam Awwa, Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates also has offices in Norwich and Stonington, CT. The practice employs 23 providers, including four M.D.s, three APRNs, a Ph.D., 11 LCSWs, two LMFTs and two LPCs. “We see about 600 patients a week,” said Rachel Simpson, Office Manager for all three locations.

Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates, which serves patients of all ages, offers medication management as well as therapy services, which include individual, family and marriage counseling and trauma-based therapy.

## **Maintaining Eye Contact Is Key**

Pointing out that WRS is Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates’ first EMR, Simpson said the practice evaluated several EMRs including SSIMED, before choosing WRS in August 2012. “We wanted a system that would be easy for the doctors and that wouldn’t take too much time away from their making eye contact with patients. The biggest downfall to having an EMR is that there may be more time spent on clicking on the computer and looking at the computer as opposed to looking at the patient. In a practice like ours, where everything is talk, it’s very important that the system is not too cumbersome. With WRS, if the patient has a certain issue you can click on that

issue and you'll get more questions that correspond with that issue. You can get more information by choosing certain diagnoses," stated Simpson.

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## Here Comes An Alert

Prescribing medications is a monumental responsibility for Psychiatric providers. “About 90% of our patients are taking medication. The doctors really like WRS Alerts. After they enter a medication in the system, there is an alert that informs them if there is a potential drug/drug interaction or how the medication could have an adverse reaction. The doctors have to make sure that our medications are ordered correctly and that they are sent to the pharmacy correctly. We order controlled medications and we have to be careful to make sure that patients are not getting too much (of the drug) or that they are not taking medications that could interact poorly with each other. WRS alerts the providers to possible drug/drug interactions and the system also alerts them about the interaction the drug could have on comorbidity. The drug could have an adverse reaction on an existing diagnosis. For example, if you order Vyvanse you'll get an alert telling you that Vyvanse could interact poorly for a patient who has an anxiety disorder. The alert comes up that Vyvanse could create an issue for some patients,” said Simpson.

## Templates To The Rescue

Charting is a laborious task that can be an impediment to a busy Psychiatry practice's efficiency. “Dr. Ammar Traboulsi is using WRS template for bipolar disorder. The template provides a list of questions that you would ask a patient who you suspect has bipolar disorder. The template makes his charting easier. During the evaluation, you want to ask more questions about the patient's moodiness and how often their mood levels change. Especially when it comes to things like the patient's thought process, you want to document whether or not they are having abnormal thoughts or if their judgment is very poor at the time. This helps the doctor rule out different disorders as well as to make sure that patients are remaining stable,” said Simpson.

Charting patients' progress is crucial for providers and patients. Pointing out that Connecticut Behavioral Health has a Suboxone maintenance program, Simpson said, “Dr. Awwa uses a tem-

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plate that enables him to easily see if the patients are doing well with their recovery. “Because our Suboxone patients are addicted to opiates, we want to make sure they are doing well; especially if they are new to recovery, they can still be a little unsure about disclosing everything to us. When they first come here a lot of patients are worried about judgment. They tend to be ashamed and they feel like there is going to be more judgment here, but there isn’t any judgment,” said Simpson.

## Patient Information STAT

When an urgent problem arises that may require changing a patient’s medication, it is imperative that the provider be able to access the patient’s records instantly. “We needed a web-based system because our providers rotate at each of the three offices. They are able to access WRS from any location, which is great. The main draw now is having all of the records in one place. When we first went live with WRS, Dr. Awwa was at a practice where before we had implemented WRS he wouldn’t have had access to the records. We were able to send him a note and he was able to look in the patient’s chart right away while they were on the phone and look at the full medication list. Sometimes patients don’t remember (the name of the medication) and you don’t want to make a medication change without really being sure what the patient is taking. This is important when the patient is not doing well and the doctor wants to change the medication. That’s when WRS is really at its best,” stated Simpson.

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## Peace of Mind

Losing a medical record or a lab report is a major liability risk and one that can have devastating consequences on a patient’s health. “WRS Fax Queue saves all of the faxes no matter what happens so we never lose a fax. This is important for liability issues as well as for providing complete care. You certainly don’t want to lose a medical record or a lab report that comes through. God forbid, something is not going well, such as if someone’s lithium level is off. I do love the fact that if we accidentally deleted a record or report from the patient EMR you still can find it in WRS Fax Queue and resend it. It’s still there and we still have it. It’s a great back-up,” said Simpson.

***“I love the patient email reminders because they allow the staff to have more time to do other things”***

## **Patient Portal Pluses**

Freeing office staff from phone calls so that they can help patients in the office is a requisite for Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates' efficiency. “I love the email reminders because they allow the staff to have more time to do other things. Our staff is very busy. They do more than just administrative work. They really have to be an extension of the doctor's philosophy as far as making patients really feel warm and comfortable and emotionally safe. Instead of being on the phone, they are talking to and helping the patients,” said Simpson, adding, “Some patients like email reminders and others prefer phone calls, so we have WRS set up for automated phone calls.” Simpson also praised WRS Patient Portal for increasing the practice's efficiency because it enables patients to go online to request appointments and refills.

## **Open Minded**

Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates is intent on providing a relaxed environment for patients. “We try to have a very nonjudgmental approach. We try to make sure all of our patients are very comfortable when they walk through the door and they feel that they really can tell us anything and realize there is no judgment no matter what they say. We'll try to help you as long as you are willing to participate in the treatment plan. Each office is decorated to the personality of the people who work there. You'll see a lot of purple. That's because my main staff member and I are big on the color purple. We have purple tablecloths. Our waiting room is set up like a living room as opposed to a regular doctor's waiting room. We don't use overhead lighting. We use lamps to keep the office calm and relaxed. Our music is probably not what you would find in your typical doctor's office. We have a radio and patients listen to the Top 40 or to Classic Rock. We have toys in our waiting room. All of our patients seem to enjoy that. We don't want patients to cancel because they had to bring their kids. Once patients know us they are able to leave their kids with us,” said Simpson.

## **A Perfect State of Mind**

So now that Connecticut Behavioral Health Associates is minding its business with WRS EMR, the practice has an array of modern tools to enable the providers and office staff to do what they do best: help patients. And, the future looks extremely bright judging from the growth the practice

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has experienced and the loyalty of its patients. “This is a large practice. We service a very large demographic. We even have patients who lived in the area who have moved out of state and they still return to us,” concluded Simpson.

