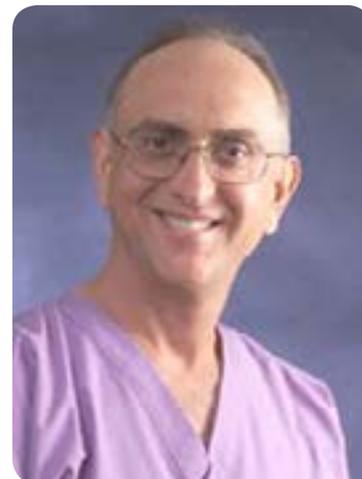


EMR Is The Best Medicine To Grow Family Practice



“The WRS Final Report looks more professional when Dr. Heller sends it to referring doctors. It’s the basics. It’s what the physicians are looking for instead of having to hunt through the pages for what they need. The most important thing was the note. The WRS notes are attractive.”

Dr. Leland Heller, M.D. **Family Practice** **Okeechobee, Florida**



When the going gets tough, the tough get going. No one illustrates this sentiment more closely than Leland Heller, M.D., solo practitioner and owner of Okeechobee Family Practice.

Consider this: When Hurricane Jeanne destroyed Dr. Heller’s office in 2004, even an angry Mother Nature couldn’t keep Dr. Heller from his appointed rounds.

“The hurricane was horrible. I had to rebuild my office. It was a terrible challenge. I worked out of a 250 square foot corner of the hospital until they built out the office,” stated Dr. Heller, who has been specializing in family medicine for 30 years. His sub specialty is psychiatry, with an emphasis on borderline personality disorder.

Breaking New Ground

No stranger to starting from scratch, in 1996 Dr. Heller took the bold step of leaving his West Palm Beach, Florida practice to set up a new practice in the small town of Okeechobee. “There were a lot of reasons I left. Crime was a big problem. I was commuting two hours a day to and from various hospitals. It was horrible,” said Dr. Heller.

No doubt about it. Starting a business all over again and building a patient base can be a nightmare. But Dr. Heller has managed to grow his Okeechobee Family Practice to where he sees between 30 to 40 patients a day. “It took four years to get to this point.” The most recent challenge that Dr. Heller tackled was finding the right EMR to continue growing his practice. “I started look-

“One thing WRS has that some EMR companies didn’t have is the system automatically calls people for appointment reminders so you don’t have to have staff doing it. I had employees who spent all day doing nothing but making those calls. They do other things now.”

ing last summer because I knew I’d be fined if I didn’t have one. And you could still get reimbursed if you figure out all the Meaningful Use requirements. You get reimbursed for your hardware and software start-up. I wanted to give it a year to see who liked what, and what was what because I’ve seen some really horrible EMR programs. Most of the EMR reports are unreadable. The quality of the final report was really important,” said Heller.

Taking Good Notes

Dr. Heller called on his colleagues for a recommendation. “Most of my friends have EMRs. They usually don’t like them. They are switching from one to another. After receiving a report from a surgeon whom I trust, I got in touch with him. The report was great and he said he liked his EMR. When I learned that it was WRS I contacted the company and asked to get a demo. I liked the WRS reports. Most of the information is on the top or on the bottom and you can find it.”

Dr. Heller’s wife, Cathy, who is also the practice manager, recalled how the other EMR companies they evaluated fell short when it came to the quality of their final reports. “The other EMR companies’ reports were five or six pages. It’s monotonous and referring doctors don’t want that. They can get that information from the patient when they come in. Everything that is required is on one page of WRS report. I like that it is to the point—it’s basically what Dr. Heller does anyway. The referring doctors want to see what the reasons are (for referring the patient). When Dr. Heller sends the report to referring doctors WRS Final Report looks very professional. It’s the basics. It’s what the physicians are looking for instead of having to hunt through the pages for what they need. The most important thing was the note. The WRS notes are attractive,” stated Heller.

Physician Friendly

Pointing out that he evaluated six EMR companies, including eClinicalWorks, Dr. Heller said, “I thought that because WRS was run by a physician, that the EMR would be a little more physician friendly. In order to receive Meaningful Use, certification was also paramount. I was aware that WRS had certifications and WRS was less expensive than eClinicalWorks.”

Running an inefficient office and wasting staff's valuable time can be a drag on the growth of a new practice. "One thing WRS has that some EMR companies didn't have is the system automatically calls people for appointment reminders so I don't have to have the staff call patients to remind them of their appointments because WRS automatically calls people. Our employees used to spend all day making appointment reminder phone calls. WRS frees them up to do other tasks," stated Dr. Heller.

Patient Portal Perks

Meeting CMS Meaningful Use criteria is enough to keep a physician up at night. The WRS patient portal not only helps practices to meet Meaningful Use criteria, it is also a vehicle for patient education. "I write my own patient information sheets and I put about 12 sheets in the EMR patient portal. The information is automatically e-mailed to the patients with the diagnosis. That will help fit the Meaningful Use criteria," Dr. Heller stated.

Cathy Heller added, "Dr. Heller has a lot of diabetes and obesity patients and he is always updating that information to help the patients with their education. If they are online they can click that page when they are on our WRS Patient Portal and find updates about their situation, whether it be diabetes or hyperlipidemia and cholesterol levels."

Having patients use the EMR to enter their personal information prior to appointments is also easing Dr. Heller's staff's workload. "The Patient Portal is a good thing. Prior to their office visit patients can enter their information and review systems questionnaire. If patients fill that information out at home before they come in and update their information at home that helps the medical assistants," asserted Dr. Heller.

Heller confirmed that patients and employees are finding the EMR is user friendly. "Several patients have already checked into the Patient Portal. One patient put their picture in. We'll be able to send messages to patients and provide patient reminders," said Heller, adding "We have seven employees. They are not finding WRS hard to use."

E-Prescribing Merits

Acknowledging that Dr. Heller previously had e-prescribing capabilities with Availity, Cathy Heller said the system had its limitations. "They provide it to Florida doctors. With Availity you had to look up the patient then prescribe the prescription and then send it or print it. Now it's within the electronic records. With WRS, it's on the patient's chart, right there. The EMR uploads all the patients' records plus sends the Rx out," she stated.

Multi-Tasking

Dr. Heller appears to have boundless energy. In fact, since 2007 he has been running Okeechobee Medical Cosmetics Center, offering cosmetic laser treatments and a line of skin care products for men and women dubbed Oxygen Botanicals. He has also written three books and has created a DVD about biological unhappiness and borderline personality disorders that he sells in his office and on his website www.biologicalunhappiness.com. Noting that WRS has created a website for Dr. Heller that he can use to sell his educational materials, Heller said, “We can also put the WRS patient portal link on our own private web site. The two websites can link together.”

Pointing out that Dr. Heller also works at Raulerson Hospital, Cathy Heller said, “He will be able to access WRS EMR there. That was one of the criteria when he was looking. We are not that big of an office. We didn’t want a server or to hire IT people. Having a web-based system was important. We do get patients from out of the country. If someone is out of the country and they are looking at his website they want to make an appointment.”

When queried if he always knew that he would have his own practice, Dr. Heller said, “It was something I’ve wanted all my life and I did it. In medical school I probably knew I wanted to be on my own. It depends on the people, but most doctors who have had partnerships have broken up over the years. In my training program they did some business training on how to run a practice. There are a lot of rewards. There’s also a lot of grief. The financial stressors are huge in solo practice. It’s really hard to be profitable. Fifty percent of doctors now belong to a hospital. Being profitable is definitely a problem.”

Peering In The Crystal Ball

So how does Dr. Heller plan on fostering Okeechobee Family Practice’s profitability in the future? “WRS is very good. The overall WRS EMR system—the medical end is good. My wife is very pleased with a lot of the aspects of WRS, particularly the insurance billing. I’m hopeful she’ll be able to use EMR for billing and we will be more profitable,” said Dr. Heller.