

EMR Gives Internal Medicine Physician Work/Family Balance



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Wellness Medical Center
Specializes in Internal Medicine
Fredericksburg, VA

Let's say that you are a physician who works in a practice with another doctor and you also work in a hospital. You want to spend more time with your family and be more involved in your church's activities. Can you ever achieve the work/life balance that you crave?

Dr. Lisa King felt that she could have the best of both worlds. So she cut ties with her partner physician at Crossroads Medical Associates as well as the hospital she was affiliated with. "In 2007, Dr. King went her own way and Wellness Medical Center was born," said Dorsel Spears, who is the owner and practice manager of Wellness Medical Center in Fredericksburg, VA.

Changing of the Guard

Acknowledging that as a newbie Internal Medicine practice, Wellness Medical Center had its fair share of challenges to meet, Spears, said, "We have always been electronic. When Dr. King was in private practice she never used paper charts. She's been electronic from day one of her solo career. Prior to WRS, we've used three EMRs: eClinicalWorks, Athena and HealthFusion's MediTouch."

Spears, who has 25 years of IT experience, explained that she decided to bid farewell to Athena and move to HealthFusion because the software was too expensive. But when she found that Athena fell short of her expectations she began a search for a new EMR.

"We moved from HealthFusion to Waiting Room Solutions because at the end of the day, once we got into HealthFusion – and it was a very short stay – HealthFusion just didn't give us what we needed. Health Fusion promised more than it delivered," said Spears.

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Let the Search Begin

Pointing out that when she evaluated EMRs, she was concerned about the systems' practice management features, Spears said that she did demos with all types of EMRs. "I had a feature list of what we wanted. We liked the WRS clean interface. It was much easier to navigate and get around than HealthFusion. With HealthFusion, my practitioners just couldn't finish charting in enough time. They found that HealthFusion required too many extra clicks. When it came to billing, I found HealthFusion was just too much. It wasn't clean. There were a lot of features that they said they had, and they didn't have. We asked for more features and they were very condescending to us," she said.

Spears went on to say that Waiting Room Solutions also surpassed HealthFusion when it came to navigability. "The practitioners can finish their charting within a decent time frame. Dr. King and the two Physician Assistants that we had at the time that we used HealthFusion took every bit of three days to finish a day's worth of charting. It started to become a nightmare because they would always be behind. HealthFusion wasn't an easy site to navigate," said Spears.

Efficiency Soars

Sending referrals can be a very time consuming task, especially when you see an abundance of patients who have a wide range of chronic health problems. Dr. King sees 120 patients a week and the Physician Assistant sees about 25 patients a week. Patients are treated for many conditions, especially high blood pressure, heart problems, cholesterol, diabetes and hypertension. "You see everything and that's why we have to do a lot of referrals. Seeing the patient is probably only 60% of that whole episode. After the doctor sees the patients, the referral department has to do the referrals and get the authorizations," said Spears. She went on to explain that WRS inbound and outbound fax capability is a huge asset in helping the staff perform these referral services.

Providing prescriptions and averting errors is yet another function that can stymie a busy staff. "E-prescribing provides accuracy and speed," stated Spears.

Training Is a Cinch

The training that is required to get providers and staff up to speed on a new EMR can be a major impediment to a smooth workflow. "We started up in mid March 2012. We went live May 1. The webinar training was excellent. WRS is a very good team. The people are really nice. Working with the team was excellent. The EMR is an excellent EMR," said Spears.

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Best Friends Forever

Finally, when Spears reveals that she has spent “her life” specializing in technology we couldn’t help but wonder how an IT guru aligned with an Internal Medicine physician in the first place.

“Dr. King’s husband is a pastor of Land of Promise church, where I am a member. We’ve both very active in the community. She was my doctor at Crossroads. We hit it off. She started having IT problems and I listened to the company that was doing her IT work and I told them, ‘It is what I do for a living.’ I told her, ‘He’s selling you a bill of goods. Don’t do that.’ She invited me to church and then I bought the practice from her in the beginning of 2012 because she wanted to concentrate more on doing just medicine and being able to go home at night and not deal with the rest of it. I’ve been managing this practice since 2007. Except for medicine I was in charge of everything anyway so we formalized it and moved on and now when somebody comes knocking on the door they just see me, instead of seeing her,” stated Spears.

Happy Staff

So how does the staff feel about switching to WRS? “When we switched from HealthFusion to WRS they were the happiest people in the world. Anytime we’ve made a change, the staff said, ‘I can’t believe you are doing this to me.’ When we switched to WRS, they said, ‘Now we can get some work done.’ HealthFusion’s creators did not look at the EMR and say, ‘How does somebody actually work in this?’ They said that their system was created by doctors. Somebody missed looking at how this flows. WRS flows,” said Spears.

Easy Check-In

Checking patients in while trying to complete other office tasks efficiently can be challenging. “The schedule is always up front and that you are able to check people in and out without having to go away (from the screen) is a big difference from HealthFusion. If you check somebody in and if you have to go look at a patient’s account in WRS, you still have your schedule there, so if you are at your front desk, you can check someone in quickly and not lose everything. It flows better than HealthFusion. HealthFusion didn’t believe in work lists. When I submit this claim I don’t want to have to go all the way back around to the billing, and click to get to the next claim. With WRS, I submit the claim, I go to submit another claim and I’m back at my worklist. And that is definitely a time saver,” said Spears.

More Meaningful Use

Applying for Meaningful Use can be a burden if you don’t have the know-how. “We would not have gone with a company if it was not certified. We are applying for the second round of Meaningful Use. I know what to do. WRS has a Meaningful Use scoreboard so I’ll know when we get there and we’ll be able to do that,” Spears remarked.

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Location, Location

So, what is it like to practice in Fredericksburg, Virginia? "It is an up and coming town. We're in the middle of D.C. and Richmond, Virginia. When I first moved here in 2003 there was hardly anything there. Dr. King and my friends have lived here longer and you just watch the place explode around you. We have a second hospital in the area now. Fredericksburg is the big city of the little area that we are in. We have people who travel 30 to 40 miles to come to the doctors. We're the medical hub. They are not going to get the specialists in outlying little towns. We're not a big town, but we're the bigger town of the area."

Pointing out that in February, the practice moved to an office building that was formerly an urgent care facility, Spears said, "We have seven exam rooms, a lab, and a break room. We try to have a semi spa like feel to make the patient feel at ease when they come in. We have artwork and it's a nice soothing green color," she said.

Finally, it appears that the right EMR has finally come along for Spears, Dr. King, the P.A., and staff. "When I was looking for an EMR, I told WRS that we were going to be tough because we have used EMRs from the beginning. We are tough to satisfy. We never knew what paper was; we are definitely a lot more critical. I've been involved in IT since I can remember. I love it. That's what I do. I love the WRS product," said Spears.