

Mastering the Business of Medicine: Practice Makes Perfect



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First Internal Medicine

Igor Huzicka, M.D.

Denver, Colorado



Disenchanted with Healthcare System

Igor Huzicka, M.D. was painfully aware that many of his colleagues were so disenchanted with the healthcare system that they were leaving solo practices or getting out of outpatient medicine entirely. But after a stint as a hospitalist and an allergy and immunology researcher, his longtime dream of opening a solo practice kept tugging at his heart. He would be able to develop his own protocols. He would finally be able to do things his own way. He could never have these opportunities at his old job. The only glitch: Dr. Huzicka didn’t really know how to run a medical business.

Flying Solo

Recalling that he was hesitant and a little anxious about going solo, in 2008 Dr. Huzicka decided to make his dream come true. He opened First Internal Medicine in Denver, Colorado where he is treating young and healthy adults who are interested in disease prevention as well as elderly Medicare patients who have multiple and complicated chronic conditions.

“In medical school, they don’t teach you anything about the business of medicine. I didn’t hire a consultant. I learned by reading books, talking to colleagues and by trial and error,” said Dr. Huzicka.

After using paper charts at his new practice for the first two years, Dr. Huzicka decided it was time to start the search for an EMR to make his Internal Medicine practice more efficient and his life less frustrating.

“Patients call me at home. I can open up their note at home, or anyplace that I go and see what’s going on with them.”

Keys to EMR Selection

Turning to the Colorado Medical Society for advice, Dr. Huzicka found an instructional DVD about how to select an EMR software system. “I also went through an EMR Matrix site which allows you to input what you want from an electronic health records system. Waiting Room Solutions emerged as one of the better systems,” said Dr. Huzicka.

Dr. Huzicka’s criteria for an EMR was well thought out. He wanted a fully integrated, web based system with a speech recognition capability and an internal medicine patient portal.

Shifting From Paper

What benefits does the shift from paper charts to an EMR have for physicians like Dr. Huzicka? He summed it up in one word: Documentation. “WRS permits me to be very detailed when I document patient visits. The ability to roll over the notes is beneficial. I know what is happening with patients when I open a note and that’s a benefit too. When patients call me at home, I can look at their note to ascertain what is happening with them,” informed Dr. Huzicka.

Having an all-in-one EMR problem solver has also enabled Dr. Huzicka to input his own protocols and predefined templates. “I don’t forget a thing because I have cheat sheets when a patient comes to me. Because I create my own templates the visit goes faster. I have made templates for common conditions such as urinary tract infection and upper respiratory infection. In addition, I have created templates for congestive heart failures. If I need to remind myself to make sure that a patient is on a diuretic or an ACE inhibitor or that I need to do an EKG each year, I have reminders as part of the guideline implementation in the WRS Assessment and Plan section,” said Dr. Huzicka.

Noting that he employs a Physician Assistant, Dr. Huzicka said, “WRS also helps my P.A. when she sees patients. It gives her an indication about what she needs to address.”

Now that he’s implemented an EMR, Dr. Huzicka can still recall the frustrations he experienced before he made the switch from paper. “The charts were all over the place. I don’t get frustrated searching for a paper chart anymore so my quality of life is better,” said Dr. Huzicka, adding, “WRS makes life easier with its e-prescribing capability. Doing refills and tracking Rx’s is so much simpler.”

Patient Accessibility

The WRS Internal Medicine patient portal gets high fives from Dr. Huzicka’s younger patients, who embrace technology. “They love the patient portal,” remarked Dr. Huzicka, who is urging his more mature patients to take advantage of the benefits of the state-of-the-art EMR patient portal.

“Whenever I see a patient I have my cheat sheets right there, so I don’t forget anything. I design my own templates and that speeds up the visit. I have templates for common problems like upper respiratory infection or urinary tract infection. I have templates for congestive heart failure.”

Standing Up to Competition

Pointing out that he evaluated EMR’s from McKesson, Allscripts, and eClinicalWorks, prior to implementing WRS in 2010, Dr. Huzicka said the defining moment came when he was granted access to the WRS general data base. “There were a couple of people who only wanted you to do a guided demo and not really let you play with the system. A couple of the EHR systems gave me a disc to install on my computer, and I didn’t like it. WRS was a user friendly, easy system to operate,” he said, adding, “I’ve read that after year one, one third of people leave their EMR due to general dissatisfaction.”

Cost Equals Opportunity

Physicians like Dr. Huzicka need to make budget conscious decisions when they are launching a new practice. “WRS was really reasonable when I started and it’s still very affordable. WRS Team answers requests promptly. They don’t leave you after you become a client. They listen when you speak,” he declared.

Implementing WRS web-based EMR enables doctors to rapidly reap Meaningful Use incentive payments.”WRS was developed to make it easy to quickly qualify for Meaningful Use incentive monies. My start-up costs were covered when I got my incentive payments so fast,” he said.

Now that he’s successfully implemented WRS, Dr. Huzicka has this advice for physicians like himself who are bent on starting their own practice: “If you know what you want get an EMR right up front. The transition from paper to electronic is not that easy. Don’t get the most expensive system. Make sure the EMR company actually lets you try the EMR before you commit to a purchase--I mean really try it out. I tried WRS for two weeks.”

Medical Entrepreneur

Finally, for someone who didn’t have formal training on the business side of medicine, Dr. Huzicka’s decision to open First Internal Medicine and to institute an EMR and practice management

solution have turned out to be pretty good business decisions that are right on target.

“I love having my own business. It was always my dream. I love patient interaction. You really get to know the patients. You are their doctor. They like to come back. You can make a difference for them, probably more than a specialist can.”