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Your Hometown Pediatrician Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine Warwick, NY

Oh, The Places You’ll Go... With A Pediatric EMR!

On an early Tuesday morning, in a cozy house perched on Grand Street in the small town of Warwick in upstate New York, two little boys and a little girl were sitting on the floor playing with a bunch of bright red, yellow and blue toys. This is Your Hometown Pediatrician in Warwick, NY and judging from the kids who are mesmerized by these toys, it’s evident that when parents say, “C’mon, it’s time for your check up with Dr. Ed,” these boys and girls don’t throw a tantrum. Even children who are under the weather have reason to cheer up, what with the colorful stickers and posters affixed to each and every wood paneled wall!



Edward F. Rossi, M.D.
Pediatric & Adolescent
Medicine



Not Your Granny’s Generation of Parents

Edward Rossi, M.D., a resident of Warwick for over 11 years, opened his pediatric practice in his hometown in March 2009 after practicing in Manhattan for 16 years. Noting that he is affiliated with NYU Langone Medical Center and Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City, Dr. Rossi believes there is a real need for “old fashioned medical care where house calls are not a thing of the past.” Open seven days a week, Dr. Rossi and his two Medical Assistants serve about 25 patients a day.

Crediting Michael Rinaldi, Medical Assistant/Practice Administrator with going all out to transform the sterile, clinical appearance of a surgeon’s office into a comfortable, kid-friendly environment, Dr. Rossi said kids weren’t the only ones he and Rinaldi were determined to please. What with the parents he serves being the tech savvy offspring of the baby boomers, it’s no wonder Dr. Rossi and Rinaldi selected an ultra modern EMR and practice management software system to catapult their practice forward.

Pointing out that he used an EMR in his Upper East Side Manhattan practice for six years, Dr. Rossi said, “I knew when I started this practice that I wanted to have an EMR. I was not going to have paper charts. We looked for office space and then we looked for an EMR. I knew I didn’t want to use Office Practicum, the program that I used in the city, because Office Practicum was very user-unfriendly. It was very difficult for new employees or a new doctor associate to get trained on the system. It took about 30 days to get anyone new up and running on that system. And that’s a lot of time to train somebody to use a program which is the only way they are going to be able to work in your office. We were looking for a user-friendly program that would do everything. I wanted a program that scheduled, that did the charting, that did billing and had everything included. We were also looking for a system that enables patient involvement, because we knew that was the way everything was moving. Younger people are very tech friendly and they want to be involved in healthcare and in their records,” said Dr. Rossi.

Emphasizing that when he and Rinaldi along with an IT associate reviewed six different EMR programs, their must-have EMR checklist included ease of use, flexibility and an “end- to-end all encompassing program,” Dr. Rossi said, “I didn’t want to have another program for billing. I didn’t want it just to be EMR. I wanted it to do scheduling. I wanted it to have a messaging capability. That was when we ultimately decided on WRS. That is what we found WRS to be able to do.”

“Young parents are very tech friendly and they want to be involved in healthcare and in their records. We wanted a system that enables the patient to have a way to be involved.”

Get Off the Phone

Calls from patients with questions about non-emergency issues can put a dent in the smooth workflow of a pediatrics practice. Still, you want to let parents know that you care. WRS Patient Portal enables messaging between patients and the practice. “Patients like to communicate with you. If you can cut down on phone calls in the office it’s a big help. It helps the staff. A big part of pediatrics is the parents, especially moms calling with questions and concerns. A lot of times they are not necessarily urgent questions that they have to get an answer to right away. With WRS Patient Portal, patients can send you a message and you can message them back at your convenience,” said Dr. Rossi.

WRS Messaging also relieves Dr. Rossi’s front office staff member from spending time on the phone making appointments. “Instead of having someone call on the phone for an appointment

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and then spend 20 minutes with the front staff person, saying ‘I can only do this day or that,’ the patient can send a message and say, ‘I want to make the well checkup for Johnny and here are the three days and times that work for me.’ Then you can have your staff find the time that works for the mom and send her back a message and let her know the appointment was made. That was helpful to have that kind of capability,” said Dr. Rossi.



Make It A Great Day

Getting through the day without a single glitch in the workflow is a pediatrician’s idea of a perfect day. “WRS gets us through the whole day. We start the computers in the morning, we look at the schedule, patients come to the front desk, and Lisa checks the patient in. She assigns them a room, and Michael will take it from there,” said Dr. Rossi.

Rinaldi added, “It’s nice because by using WRS you are able to see what rooms you need to place what patients in. We’re able to prep and do the vitals if it’s a physical, or if it’s a sick visit we’re able to do temperatures and everything else that needs to be done. It helps manage Dr. Rossi and utilize his resources in the best way.”

Smooth Operation

Can customized pediatrics templates really make a pediatrician’s life easier? For Dr. Rossi, the answer is yes. “Michael will bring the patient into the room. Depending on what kind of visit, sick or well, we have the templates. We’ve templated WRS so that we have visits for 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, and 15 months and up. We also have sick templates and depending on the kind of visit, Michael will bring the patient into the room, open up that template and start the charting on the patient. If I’m up front or at my desk, I can be at my computer and get a heads up of what’s going on in the room, what the chief complaint is and why they are coming in. I know before I come into the room basically what I’m going to be walking into if I don’t already know by what was put on the schedule. I go into the room and do my charting on the patient. I continue with the H and P (History and Physical Exam), the Review of System, from the physical all the way down to the last part, where you make your Assessment and Plan and then the patient is finished, they’ll go upfront, and Michael or Lisa will check them out.”

Low Start-Up Costs

When starting a new practice from scratch, keeping costs down is a prime concern. “I knew from experience what the price was for Office Practicum. Initially there was a large start up cost for Office Practicum and there was a large start up cost for some of the other programs. WRS was the

most reasonably priced for what you were getting. Because I was starting this new practice I certainly did not want to lay out a huge amount of money for a system since the practice potentially might not go the way I wanted it to go. Initially, there was a minimal start up cost, and the monthly cost is really a small percentage of the overhead of running a practice. Dollar for dollar, for what you are getting and the amount we use WRS program, it's pennies a day for us," said Dr. Rossi.

Follow-Up Cues

How can a busy pediatrics practice remember to remind patients to come in for follow-up appointments so that they can identify and care for sick children and help kids stay healthy? "If we have a patient we want to come back for a follow-up, we'll put an e-mail reminder in WRS. We use WRS for our yearly flu follow-up when we have to compile the patients we need to bring in for the flu shot. We know who received the flu shot the previous year, so we will send those patients an e-mail that we are starting our flu clinic and they should schedule an appointment. If we know a baby has to come back in two months we'll put a reminder in the system. A month before the appointment, they'll get the reminder to call and set up an appointment or be informed that they have an appointment coming," stated Dr. Rossi.

Keeping Tabs

Having a reporting tool to keep track of patient visits enables a physician to better manage his practice and plan for the future. "You can go into various reports and see how many patients you had with a diagnosis of strep throat that month. You can see how many patients you diagnosed for flu, or keep track of how many blood tests have been done in a month. It helps with our vaccine inventory because I can see on a month-by-month basis how much of a particular vaccine I've done. It helps me with ordering so I can plan going forward. For example, if it's summer and we're having less newborns, then I don't need to order as much vaccine at this time. It helps to run the practice in many different ways academically. You can use it if you want to see how many patients in your practice have ear infections over any given time. You can do a study on what months are the worst for ear infections. You can do a study for patient visits if you want to see how busy your December has been versus the previous year. You can find out what's been coming in and what you can potentially expect for the coming flu season. Should we leave more time open in January for sick visits because January is a particularly busy time for sickness versus July? WRS has been helpful for knowing how to adjust our schedule from month to month," said Dr. Rossi.

Home Work

With little kids, accidents and illnesses happen, and in many cases, they happen after office hours. That's why it's imperative to be able to access patients' records after the office closes for the day. "I can access WRS from home, which is great because I can get it from any laptop. If I'm

on call and I get a call that Johnny was in the park and he stepped on a rusty nail, I need to know when the last tetanus shot was. I can get in the system and get that information. If I'm on call and I'm at home I have access to my whole practice. It is very helpful. Michael uses it that way, too. When a patient calls and we need to know the dose of medicine to give them because they have a fever, we get into the last checkup. We instantly know their weight so that we can prescribe the correct dose of medication. It's very helpful," Dr. Rossi said.

Paper Charts Are So Old School

When a new patient brings paper records from their previous pediatrician, trying to decipher the doctor's handwriting is a daunting task. "We do make a point of telling every new patient we use electronic medical records. Having patients join the practice from another practice is one of the worst nightmares when you get a paper chart that you are expected to read. Those records are handwritten and copied on a copier machine, and you have no idea of the handwriting and you can't get the information. Children go to the pediatrician often throughout their childhood and there are multiple visits. You have to go in the room with the new patient, and start going all over the past history again because the information you got is basically useless. With WRS, if people are moving or they need access to their records, we give a printout or we can fax directly from the system. We don't have to have paper. We try to be as paperless as possible here. We can get that information. It's legible, clear and concise. I'm confident when I give that out that what I'm giving out is a reflection of the practice versus a pile of papers that are illegible and that would be a reflection on the office. If the paperwork looks like this, how unorganized and what kind of care is that practice providing? So one of the first things we say is we have electronic medical records," said Dr. Rossi.

Security of the Web

A power outage can have devastating effects on a practice. But, if their system is web-based, the providers and staff can access the system from any location that does have power. "It was important to have a web-based system. When I had Office Practicum in the city it was not web-based and it was horrible to have that kind of system. You did not have the same access to it; patients did not have access to it. If there was a problem in your office with anything, such as electricity going out, or a problem with the server, you now had your whole system down, and you had no way to access the records. We had to keep a paper chart backup in our office. That was a waste of time. You had a filing cabinet full of charts, and an expensive EMR system sitting in every room and you were still saying, 'I have the security of keeping paper charts.' When we started our practice our goal was to be as paperless as we can. It's better to say you are green and it's a neater, cleaner, better way to practice medicine. We have no filing cabinets here. Everything gets scanned into the computer. Our faxes come directly through the system and they go into the computer. As soon as the lab results come, they are reviewed and we immediately match them to the patient and we

have them there and they can be pulled up at any time. If the patient calls and wants a copy of the labs, the labs can be printed out and given to them,” said Dr. Rossi.

Rinaldi echoed Dr. Rossi’s sentiments about the benefits of a web-based EMR. “We have 24/7 access to everything. That’s a huge convenience knowing that at any point we can touch a patient’s record and have it right in front of us, and that we can answer questions. WRS gives us the ability to schedule 24/7. We have a virtual office with WRS. That’s a huge asset.”

Easy Billing, Fast Payments

When it comes to receiving prompt payments for service, Your Hometown Pediatrician is walking on easy street. “When you do your note and sign off on your note, a claim is created, the system picks up everything off of the note and puts it on the CMS 1500 form for you. You or your biller can go over that and if there is a question, they can go back to the note and see, this is a 15-month checkup and normally this vaccine is done, let me go back to the note and see why it wasn’t showing up. The note will say that the child has fever and cold, and the biller will say, ‘Okay I don’t need to put this on here.’ The whole thing is seamless. I do the billing sometimes so I know. I do my note and at the end of the day I go to create claims. I pick those day’s claims and I go through them and you can create claims on 25 patients in a matter of minutes and they are sent electronically to the clearinghouse. The next day you can go in the system and see if any of those claims are rejected because that is going to come back to the system and let you know. Whoever is doing the billing can go in and rework that claim and resubmit it. We are getting paid much faster.”

Training Is a Cinch

Training staff on a new EMR system can wreak havoc on a practice’s efficiency. “Training was a breeze. When a new person comes in, you want them to be up and running from the start. In my city practice, for anyone who came in it was a 30-day training period to use the system. If you have to give them a 30- day down time to be training at night or have someone to sit with them and show them what to do, then you are taking time away from an employee and the new employee is not being effective in the office because they are being trained. I asked my other Medical Assistant if the system was difficult to learn, and she said that WRS was very user-friendly and she learned the system very quickly. We also had someone who was not computer savvy who came from another pediatrics practice where they didn’t use an EMR, and she used our system very quickly,” said Dr. Rossi.

Rinaldi added, “The nice part of WRS is that in the morning we sit down with them and go over some basic functions of WRS and by the afternoon they are comfortable doing basic tasks. There’s never been a software that’s been this seamless. Within hours they have a comfort level, versus weeks and months.”

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Documentation Made Easy

Being able to easily and completely document well and sick visits is essential. “WRS has everything you need from start to finish. Developmental questions that are asked in a one-year visit are already in WRS. You can check off, yes or no. If everyone gets a blood test and chicken pox vaccine at one year of age, that information is already on there, so you don’t have to do that in your Assessment and Plan. The plan is going to be up there. The American Academy of Pediatrics’ anticipated guidance on Behavioral and Nutrition is on there. It’s already been documented for you. At the end of the day you don’t have to sit with a paper chart and say, did I put this down, did I document this, did I discuss this with the parent in the room? If you didn’t document it, you didn’t do it. And at the end of the day, anything that can help you with documentation and give you those reminders to do things when you are in the room, especially if you are having a busy day and you didn’t think of it is helpful. It’s the same way with sick visits. If you have a visit for strep throat, you can template it to focus on that, too, and pull up that template and have that there for you,” said Dr. Rossi.

WRS also helps Dr. Rossi document his young adult patients’ visits. “We see patients up to 21 years of age. If they come in for an exam you can template it to young adult exam. There are things you need to go over versus a pediatric exam. If you know you are giving Menactra® or a tetanus booster, you have it templated for a visit at that time. So everyone who is involved, will know at this exam Dr. Rossi is going to give a tetanus, let me get that ready and bring that into the room for him so I don’t have to leave the room and go back up to the front desk and say, ‘I need a tetanus shot’ or get it for myself. It’s anticipating what you are going to do at that point in time.”



Join Our E-Community

Nowadays, parents don’t reach for the phone as much as their parents did when they have a concern about their children. “If you come to our practice, we are very tech friendly. We have an EMR, which we encourage you to use. We will show you how to access it. We explain what you can get from that. You will have ways to contact us, message, us, get immunization records, give us information on your child’s history and if your son goes to the ER they can put that in there so we have it communicated what happened during that visit and what was done. If a family is traveling and a child gets sick they can go into the system

and give you that information. They can add family history. Those are important things in medicine. We give them a separate phone number to text me. We open up technology to patients and tell them we are really tech-friendly in this practice. We like to use technology and we encourage them to use it. We see a lot of first time parents with young babies. They have grown up in an era of technology and that's what they like and that's what they want. They want to have that accessibility and they want to communicate that way. They are not looking to just pick up the phone," said Dr. Rossi.

E-Prescribing

Preventing medication errors is a huge responsibility and pediatrics is one practice where it is easy to make a medication error when prescribing because dosages are so dependent on a child's age and weight. "WRS e-prescribing will tell you if you accidentally give a dose that is not the correct dose, it will prompt you; this dose may be over the weight and age for this child. It will prompt you if a child has a penicillin allergy. If a child is on another medication and there is an interaction with the two drugs it will tell you and ask you, do you still want to go forward? Once you prescribe the medicine in the room, you have already sent it to the pharmacy and the patients know when they leave your office, you've done your job. It also cuts down on writing on a piece of paper, which is illegible. I would never in this age handwrite a prescription. There are too many errors that can be made. There's the issue of handwriting that is difficult to read. In pediatrics, medication is dose dependent on weight. There is a big difference between a teaspoon or a half a teaspoon. I wouldn't want a mistake to be made by a pharmacist. With WRS e-prescribing, it's exactly what you want it to be. You know the pharmacist has it and on your end you've given them clear information on what they need to do. When you e-prescribe a drug, the system will also tell you if that drug is going to be on that formulary for that patient's insurance," said Dr. Rossi.

Red Carpet Treatment

After a practice signs on the dotted line, some companies don't respond when a question or a problem arises. "We can call WRS. They have support through the system. We get quick replies back. If it's an issue you are unsure of you can call them up. It's not difficult to talk with them. If we are frustrated, they have been very helpful in talking us through things. They were also open to suggestions from us. If we felt this was something good for our practice and for other pediatric practices, they were very receptive. Their development team was on it and in short order it was in the system," said Dr. Rossi.

City Mouse, Country Mouse

So now that Dr. Rossi lives and practices in his hometown, how is life in the country? "My life is

easier here than in the city. I'm happy. It's a different phase of my life. I was happy practicing in the city. It's a different kind of way to practice here. Many things are making my life easier, such as not having a commute and having a system that is easy for me to use. I'm a sole practitioner and sometimes my day can be long. Having a system that I know that at the end of the day, I've documented. I'm done. I can go home and it's finished has been easy as opposed to leaving a pile of charts on my desk, which happened often with the system I had in the city because it was a difficult system to use. You'd go back the next day and still have charting to do from the previous day. That never happens now. When I leave here, my notes are done, they are signed, the billing is done and I'm ready to start the next day."

Rinaldi pointed out, "Everything in the system will change colors as you move patients from check-in to check-out. We're able to glance at the system at any given moment know what has been completed and what hasn't. Dr. Rossi uses this system from start to finish so we're able to basically see from any given moment, where there are blocks, and where we can put a sick visit in. Because of WRS ease of use Dr. Rossi can utilize his time better. Because he's a sole practitioner, he's able to see more patients."

"I couldn't see practicing without an EMR. I don't know how doctors do it. I've used Epic as well as Office Practicum and those are difficult systems to use. The patient flow is very difficult and if someone does something wrong in the system, the rest of the system can't go forward. With WRS you can go forward. You don't have to be dependent on someone else finishing their part so you can do your part."

Free Time

So what does Dr. Rossi do with the time that he's been given now that he doesn't have a long commute to the city? "I spend more time practicing and seeing patients. It has allowed me more free time to bike ride and read. WRS has also given me the opportunity to do some of those things on my free time."

Noting that with three children he really doesn't have much free time, Rinaldi said, "Dr. Rossi will let me be on call from home. I am able to have my family and on my laptop pull up WRS and work from home and that is a huge convenience. I can cover the phones and work from my home. It's great to have that ability to do that."

Dr. Rossi agreed that working at home with WRS is advantageous. "One field you never can work from home is medicine. But WRS has enabled us to work from home and patients don't realize that. That's a big plus to have that system. Sometimes on Saturday afternoons I'm taking calls and I have the system up. Patients are getting calls and they are not sure if I am in the office or sitting

at home. Michael is still valuable to the office at home where he can even have calls forwarded to him and be working in system in a way that is helpful to us. I never thought that would happen. WRS ease of getting into the system has enabled us to do that.”

And To Think That I Saw It On Grand Street

With a Fantasy Room, Fish Room, Green Room with animals and jungle, it’s not surprising that children like to linger in Dr. Rossi’s cozy house. While the children are very easy to please, Dr. Rossi admits that the parents are more difficult to please. “I worked on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Now I’m practicing in the country and the parents are same. Children are easiest to please. We know how to do that very well.” So, how is he pleasing the parents? “The access we’ve given people has really helped and they are pleased. In pediatrics, they know they have a way to be connected to you 24/7. That makes our moms and dads very at ease with the practice and that’s why our practice has grown in three years. WRS has been a big aspect of it.”

Rinaldi summed up what contributes to parents’ satisfaction in these words, “We’re able to have a team approach. Dr. Rossi allows me to be in the room and ask questions, and take mom’s concerns, and put them in the system so that when he walks in the room he knows he’s going to cover these things. We get so much more out of the visit. When the parent comes in they feels valued. We care about them and he knows why they are walking through that door. That’s a huge tool in itself. We have the ability to make patients have that comfort and feel valued and feel they are getting the most out of that visit.”

Finally, Dr. Rossi offered his view on the success the practice is enjoying with this sentiment, “I have the old-fashioned doctor’s bag and a homey feel to the practice and that’s part of our approach here. And with WRS we also have a modern approach.”