



Helping Improve Communication, Collections and Clinical Services

Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center



Helen Combs

Client Case Study

Since the installation of the ConcurMD system, Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center (AAAC) communicates more accurate information with physicians, staff and patients. In 2006 AAAC was a two-provider, two-site practice with a total of 5,000 square feet of office space using paper-based medical records and a UNIX-based practice management system.

Said Helen Combs, Practice Administrator, "The practice management system we had prior to MedSym was not evolving with the practice's growing practical and technical requirements, and we did not have an EHR. The prior system was not intuitive and schedules were difficult to manage. The medical record pages were often difficult to locate as everything was on paper and keeping up with filing was labor intensive. It was also often difficult to find charts. From a billing perspective, to post payments and charges the billing and reception department employees had to view many layers of different screens."

"The physicians wanted to improve the practice's efficiency," said Combs. "We selected the MedSym practice management and electronic health record solution. In

2006 we installed ConcurMDPM and ConcurMDEHR. MedSym enabled us to become virtually paperless within three months. The efficiency ConcurMD created allowed us to grow our practice to three physicians and a nurse practitioner and we easily added a third practice location."

About the Client

Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center

Location: Birmingham, Ala.

MedSym Products:

- ConcurMDEHR
- ConcurMDPM

Practice Specifics:

- 3 Physicians
- 1 Nurse Practitioner
- 3 Locations
- 36 Years of providing care

Expert Training and Implementation Program

The practice implemented both the EHR and PM within three months' time with the PM first and the EHR close behind. This approach minimized downtime in the office since the physicians were customizing the EHR and training on the system while the office staff was transitioning to the PM software. "We utilized ConcurMD's training team to help us optimize the software, and they continue to work with us on new projects to maximize our productivity. The training specialist made sure that everyone was in the right place at the right time and made the process fun. A very well-planned project management process was created specific to our practice nuances. After the training, we were well prepared to utilize the ConcurMD system," said Combs.

Customized Practice Workflow Enhances Communication

With MedSym's guidance the practice customized ConcurMDEHR for their allergists

creating templates for initial visits, physical exams, follow-up, assessments and plans, procedures, order sets, treatments for chronic conditions and more.

Using the EHR, the physicians can document patient visits using point-and-click methods which ensures that the documentation is thorough, fast and accurate. Physicians believe accurate documentation is one of the primary benefits of the EHR. Traditional dictation has been replaced with the point-and-click method, eliminating tens of thousands of dollars annually.

Said Weily Soong, MD, "The EHR gives me confidence that the information I'm gathering is accurately recorded in our medical records and that it is available when I'm communicating with other physicians. I especially enjoy being able to access the data at home when I am on-call or am dealing with a difficult case after-hours."

Improved communication extends to staff and patients. When patients call in, the practice keeps records of their questions in the electronic charts and staff can now easily answer most patients' questions. Said Combs, "We no longer have to delay our response so we can manually pull charts."

Improved Quality of Life for Physicians

Because physicians document exams as they perform them, they no longer face stacks of paperwork at the end of the day. Said Dr. Soong, "My quality of life has improved dramatically." I used to go home at 7pm, if not later, because I had to finish my documentation. I can now leave at a reasonable hour."

Because the electronic records are available over a secure private network, physicians can also access the records from anywhere and anytime.

Streamlined Clinical Process

The integration of the ConcurMDEHR and ConcurMDPM have streamlined and im-



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— Helen Combs, Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center, Birmingham, Ala.
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Client Benefits

- Physicians document using point-and-click menus, improving thoroughness and accuracy
- Replacing dictation has saved tens of thousands of dollars annually
- Physician quality of life has improved
- Commercial claims are paid in two weeks
- Scheduling can be customized to the needs of each physician
- Real time orders and results improves productivity
- Automated consult letters speed that process
- EHR documentation supports real time coding
- Real time coding permits billing for self-pays at end of visit

ConcurMDEHR™

ConcurMDPM™

ConcurMDLIS™

proved workflow throughout the practice. The scheduling module allows the staff to more easily schedule patients with the appropriate provider. Scheduling can be specifically customized to address the way each provider practices and the system can schedule multiple locations from one central computer which greatly improves the patient experience both over the phone and in the office.

The PM/EHR system integration improves productivity. Said Dr. Soong, “The icons make it easy to multi-task, I can check on labs and write orders easily between patients. The calendar icon lets me check my schedule at a glance.”

When lab tests come in via the real time lab interface, the results are immediately available in the electronic record, which allows the physicians to look at and approve them at their convenience. The system also automatically creates consult letters to the referring physicians. Said Combs, “We used to handwrite letters and fax them. Now all the relevant information is put into the letter automatically and sent the very next day after the patient is seen.”

Improved Collections

Once the physicians finish documenting exams, they code them and use the EHR to perform an Evaluation & Management (E&M) coding check for confirmation. More complete documentation helps ensure that physicians do not under code. As Combs explained, “Physicians have a tendency to under code. The EHR helps with that. For example, if we do a head and neck exam we use the template checks that are included in the EHR. When we indicate that yes, we performed each one, it ensures that the information in the record is accurate. We are now confident that every test we perform is accurately billed and nothing falls through the cracks.”

More accurate coding and defensible documentation have virtually eliminated claims denials. Said Combs, “It’s like night and day. Previously about 30-35 percent of our claims were denied; now it’s virtually zero. The only denials I get are for benefits that are not covered. And collections have improved dramatically.”

The fact that physicians code their exams in real time also helps the practice better manage self-pays for patients with high deductible health insurance plans. Said Combs, “We now know instantly what to charge peo-

ple who haven’t reached their deductible so we can collect in real time at the end of the visit. This has really helped our collections.”

Electronic filing means that the practice can now file claims within 24 hours, rather than the two weeks previously. As a result claims are now paid within 2 weeks rather than 5 to 6 weeks, improving cash flow.

Overall the billing staff estimates that ConcurMDPM helped them improve productivity 25 to 35 percent compared with their earlier practice management system. At the same time, receivables plummeted from \$1 million in 2005, which represented 2.4 months of charges with 35 percent over 90 days to \$265,000 representing 1.08 months of charges with only 14 percent over 90 days.

Reporting

The practice uses ConcurMDPM reporting capabilities to better manage their operations. For example, they can look at billings each month by physician, receivables by aging bucket, changes month by month, visit volumes and overall financial health. They can also analyze insurance payers’ payment performance.

Since ConcurMDEHR and ConcurMDPM were installed in 2006, patient visits have increased from 9,635 to 13,582 in 2008 with an average increase of 184 visits per provider. At the same time, net collections increased from \$2,500,000 in 2006 to \$3,504,000 in 2009. While this increase is partially due to the addition of two providers, it also reflects better coding and collections.

Overall Benefits

In addition to quantitative results, the increase in efficiency has improved patient care and service. Said Combs, “Using MedSym, we are now able to better accommodate patient requests with fewer telephone messages to physicians. Improved documentation and preparedness within the electronic chart means better clinical data for the physician and less frustration for the staff since we can access every piece of information instantly and know that it is current and accurate.”

The practice has also been identified as a Better Performing Practice by MGMA for the past two years, in the areas of Productivity and Efficiency in Staffing. Said Combs, “This is an honor, and I attribute this in part to our relationship with MedSym.”