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Managed Technology Strategy is Healthy for Medical Office Practice and Business

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Fundamentally, my business philosophy for managing my medical practice is to provide quality and timely care that meets our patients' needs. That's what shapes the information and communications technology strategy for our medical office. We have to be highly available for our patients ? they call the shots. We create and maintain our competitive edge by being very responsive to the needs of our patients; information and communications technology helps us do that through advanced services that utilize the Internet, Internet protocol and web applications. Our medical office is focused on providing a pleasant and efficient experience for our clients who turn to Woodlands OB/GYN Associates for their health and medical needs. Our medical office management practices and technology support this objective.

Let me state it another way. If our patients have to wait too long, they'll go somewhere else. If we have to schedule appointments to far out, they'll go somewhere else. Operating efficiently has a positive impact on these factors, and a good managed technology strategy is key to efficient operations.

?We have to be highly available for our patients ? they call the shots.?

Our managed information and communications technology strategy at Woodlands OB/GYN makes a difference by helping us achieve these objectives:

- be responsive and available to our patients
- have patient records be clear and concise
- communicate efficiently with insurance companies
- speed up reimbursements from insurance companies
- staff and patients can get information quickly and conveniently
- medical staff can focus more time on introducing leading edge medical services
- achieve competitive advantage through excellent patient satisfaction and services

The advanced technology services and solutions that help us accomplish these objectives include managed voice services using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), broadband connectivity, network management, computer workstations, tablet PCs for in-office mobility, electronic medical records and, of course, technical planning, reporting and support.

As an example, our managed voice services are highly customized and patterned for our office work flow. They are set up to help be highly responsive to customer needs even during high traffic or busy times. Our practice manager can quickly observe what's going on throughout our office in the phone network without leaving her desk. Last year, after Hurricane Ike when many offices in our region were completely unreachable for days, we were able to route and receive phone calls and messages. This is our commitment to availability and care that our clients value highly. It was possible using VoIP and alternate call routing and handling technology that's included in our managed voice services plan.

We've looked at several different solutions for electronic health records. There are subscription based business models as well as ones where you pay for the software and installation up front. Our strategy for electronic medical records (EMR) is consistent with our objective for sustaining high patient satisfaction. At the same time, it increases employee productivity and it also reduces costs because some insurance carriers for medical practices will give a discount on premiums. Medicare and Medicaid programs will also reimburse a greater amount on claims for medical practices using EMR.

?Operating efficiently has a positive impact... and a good managed technology strategy is key to efficient operations.?

Operating efficiently and accurately gives us the time to personalize our services more for our clients, and that deepens the relationship and increases patient satisfaction. Having excellent client relationships provides financial benefits to our medical business. A high percentage of our patients are existing loyal clients who come back regularly. By having their information readily and quickly at hand, our practice spends a higher percentage of time delivering valuable care and attention and a lower percentage of time on administrative matters. That produces satisfied clients. My view is that technology should shorten lag times and increase efficiency and accuracy so that our patients have a superb medical service experience.

What I would advise for other medical practices, especially those with multiple doctors on staff, is this: a competitive technology strategy will require some investment and ongoing sustaining costs, but it will pay off over the medium and long term. I would also recommend going the direction of engaging a managed technology service provider who is focused on the customer, is flexible to serve and support your multiple technology needs, provides excellent service and is committed to helping you achieve a well integrated technology strategy that is beneficial for your practice. Your provider should be interested in caring for your practice just like you and your medical staff are interested in caring for your clients.

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