5 TECH TRENDS
Driving Pediatric Practice Success

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Pediatricians face challenges unlike any other specialists - from helping patients too young to articulate issues to factoring parents’ wishes into care plans - and must constantly balance the clinical aspects of caring for our smallest patients with the need to stay afloat in an environment that is making it increasingly hard to do so.

Mounting industry pressures like escalating costs, a deteriorating payer mix, the transition to ICD-10, and rising administrative burdens are cutting into the time pediatricians can dedicate to patient care and causing significant physician burnout. Unsurprisingly, in a 2013 survey, almost one third of pediatricians said they expect their practice’s profitability to trend “somewhat negatively” or “very negatively” over the next year.¹

As pediatricians look for ways to gain footing, taking steps like adopting new technologies or replacing legacy systems is key to reducing administrative burdens, freeing up more time for patients, and improving financial results. In the following report, you’ll learn about five critical technologies that help pediatricians run their practices more efficiently, profitably and enjoyably.

¹http://www.poweryourpractice.com/practice-profitability-index/
Shifting to The Cloud to Reduce Costs & Gain Convenience

Rising operating costs topped the list of challenges facing practices in MGMA-ACMPE’s 2013 survey of medical practice executives. Naturally, practices are looking for cost-effective healthcare IT solutions to mitigate financial obstacles. Cloud-based practice management (PM) systems, electronic health records (EHRs), and other software solutions are becoming increasingly popular due to their relative affordability, along with their heightened adaptability and accessibility.

With cloud-based solutions, pediatricians gain three key benefits:

- The software is accessible with just a computer and Internet connection, so there are no expensive hardware purchases or yearly maintenance fees required. As a result, practices avoid the hefty up-front and long-term ownership costs typically associated with client-server systems.

- Cloud-based software delivers automatic updates that integrate seamlessly with the system, so practices avoid losing productivity to long downloads or trouble-shooting phone calls. In addition to being simple, cloud-based updates are also less costly (and often free).

- Users can access cloud-based software 24/7, at home or on the go, so they can get work done where and when it works best for them.

Cloud-based solutions have the potential to reduce operating costs, keep practices more current with less hassle, and boost pediatricians’ productivity both inside and outside of the office.

Switching to Integrated Practice Management & EHR Systems to Maximize Efficiency

The heavy administrative burdens pediatricians bear—50% spend 10+ hours on paperwork and administrative activities per week—are leading to substantial incidences of burnout.\(^3\) A recent Medscape survey found that 35% of pediatricians are burned out, due in large part to having “too many bureaucratic tasks” and “spending too many hours at work.”\(^4\) Thus, it’s critical for pediatricians to identify new ways to boost efficiency, so they can get their work done faster and improve their work-life balance. While well-designed PM and EHR systems bring efficiency gains by themselves, the benefits are magnified when these systems are integrated.

Here’s how:

- Pediatricians and staff avoid productivity losses from having to go back and forth between systems, often entering the same information twice. Truly integrated systems link smoothly so data entered in one automatically populates in the other. The result? Users complete their work more efficiently, leaving less room for error.

- An integrated system is often the more cost-effective solution, especially since it allows practices to avoid constructing an interface between separate systems.

- Practices have a single source for customer service. In addition to streamlining the initial service experience (e.g., implementation and training), there is no back-and-forth between vendors, so questions get resolved more quickly.

Every minute that technology frees up for pediatricians is a minute they can reallocate to patient care or their own personal well-being. When pediatricians opt for an integrated system, they not only recover the time they’ve been losing, they also reduce stress levels through fewer interoperability issues and a better service experience.


Growing Use of Patient Portals to Raise Productivity & Enhance Patient Care

When the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented, an estimated 5 million children will gain health insurance coverage. Despite their desire to help more patients, many pediatricians will be limited by ongoing resource constraints. In fact, almost 40% of pediatricians surveyed in the 2013 CareCloud/QuatiaMD Practice Profitability Index said they lack the resources needed to take on these new patients. In the struggle to do more with less, patient portals can be powerful aids in boosting efficiency, freeing up time, and driving better outcomes. Portals are especially promising for pediatricians due to the scope of care they provide and the volume of phone calls they receive daily.

With patient portals, pediatric practices gain key capabilities that boost efficiency, while providing added convenience to their patients’ parents:

• Parents can schedule appointments, request prescription refills, and ask for health forms (e.g., for school or camp) online. This “self-service” option reduces calls to the practice and lets parents contact the practice in a more convenient way.

• Parents have access to their children’s health records online, including immunization records, which helps them keep better track of their children’s health histories and further cuts down on calls to the practice.

• Parents and their children’s doctors can exchange messages securely online, allowing them to connect with ease. This strengthens family engagement and reduces hassle for both parties (e.g., phone calls, stacks of messages, interruptions).

Despite such benefits, these tools are still under-utilized. In a 2013 Deloitte survey, only 24% of physicians said their patients could schedule visits or access test results on the web and only 19% said patients could request prescription refills online. As industry changes stretch providers even thinner, patient portals have the potential to drive both efficiency and outcomes by connecting pediatricians with parents in a new way.

Only 24% of physicians said their patients could schedule visits or access test results on the web

2 http://www.poweryourpractice.com/practice-profitability-index/
3 Deloitte 2013 Survey of U.S. Physicians
4 Leveraging Mobile Solutions to Accomplish More On-The-Go

The number of physicians working on tablet computers rises each year, recently reaching 72% (the iPad being the most popular), according to Manhattan Research. In addition to accessing EHRs and making notes on the go, physicians are using tablets for various other activities, including checking their schedules, sending emails, and educating patients. Given that pediatricians have such heavy patient loads—almost 40% see 100 or more patients per week—they are particularly poised to benefit from getting more work done in real-time rather than accumulating a pile of to-dos for the end of the day.

With mobile solutions, pediatricians can gain major benefits like:

- Improved workflow: in a recent survey, 74% of healthcare providers said their tablet improved their workflow.

- Higher productivity: the same survey showed that healthcare professionals using tablets gained 1.2 hours per day. Relatedly, 86% reported that the tablet makes them better multi-taskers.

- Collaboration: 66% of providers said the tablet helps increase cooperation amongst colleagues.

Physicians have also found mobile technologies beneficial in a variety of other ways, such as for showing images to patients. Thus, as the demands on pediatricians’ time continue to grow, mobile technologies have the potential to play an important role in helping them improve both productivity and patient care.

5 Adopting Analytical Tools To Monitor Performance & Make Educated Decisions

“Business Analytics” can mean many different things, but in the context of pediatric practices, well-designed analytics tools can help pediatricians make data-driven decisions that lead to improved practice performance. Armed with actionable insights, pediatricians can take appropriate actions to boost their efficiency and profitability. Given that about one in five pediatricians belongs to an ACO, data access is even more critical, as ACO members need to assess and report on performance, while also identifying areas for improvement.

While the best systems provide data in a whole host of areas, the three key categories are:

- Billing: robust solutions can answer an array of questions that help pediatricians benchmark results, identify issues, and track results over time. Possible questions include: How is my A/R trending? Have I collected more this year versus last year? How effective is my practice at securing payment on first submission? What does my payer mix look like?
• Operations: systems that include operational data can help pediatricians ascertain where the practice is functioning well and where it’s falling short. Key questions might include: How quickly are my staff billing after patient visits? Which providers are seeing the most (or least) patients? How are my practice’s no-show rates trending?

• Clinical & Patient-Related: these reports can include a variety of data about clinical trends and patient characteristics. Key questions might include: Which codes am I using the most? What do my patient demographics look like? What is the breakdown of well-child vs. sick visits for each provider in my practice?

When considering the need for data, pediatricians must bear in mind that data alone is not enough. Systems that deliver on their potential do more than house data; they make it easy to access specific data of interest and present it in visually appealing ways. The right tools make it simple for pediatricians to keep an ongoing pulse on their practice and consistently incorporate data into their decision-making.

**Conclusion**

While an array of exciting technologies have emerged in recent years, we narrowed this list down to those with the greatest potential to boost the efficiency and profitability of pediatric practices, while raising pediatricians’ overall satisfaction. Cloud-based technologies, integrated PM-EHR systems, patient portals, mobile technologies, and analytical tools can all have a meaningful impact on pediatricians’ practices and lives. These systems truly deliver on the promise of technology so pediatricians can have more time for the patients who need them.
CareCloud is a leading provider of web-based practice management, revenue cycle management, electronic health record (EHR), and medical billing software and services for medical groups. The company’s products are connecting providers to one another – and to their patients – through a fully integrated digital healthcare ecosystem that can be accessed on any browser or device.

CareCloud is helping thousands of physicians to increase collections, streamline operations and improve patient care in 45 states. The company was named a winner of IBM’s SmartCamp Silicon Valley 2010 for its innovative technology and has raised $44 million in VC funding from Intel Capital, Norwest Venture Partners, and Tenaya Capital. To learn more about CareCloud, please visit www.carecloud.com.

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