



Patagonia Health's built-in Pharmacy App Automates Pharmacy Workflow for Public Health Department at Hoke County

BACKGROUND

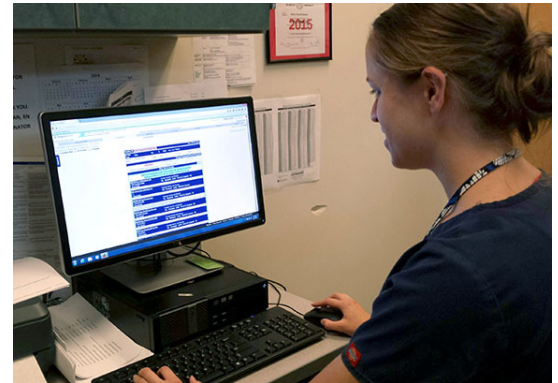
For public health departments and behavioral health agencies, having an in-house pharmacy is an added benefit for the patients they serve. For example, local health departments dispense family planning medications (e.g. birth control pills) as part of family planning Title X program. Similarly, behavioral health agencies dispense medications including methadone. But while providing the convenience of medication dispensing by the agency is an important part of quality care, handling the inventory and dispensing medications can be a daunting task to manage with accuracy.

For local health departments, medications are dispensed (e.g. for family planning) under standing orders from a Medical Doctor and a part time pharmacist is responsible to ensure compliance.

"We needed to improve our accountability and compliance of pharmaceuticals within our on-site pharmacy" said Helene Edwards, Health Director HCHD. So the Hoke County team, in conjunction with their part time pharmacist, began the process of finding the right solution for their department.

CHALLENGE

The key problem Hoke County Health Department (HCHD) was trying to solve was the accuracy of documentation, including inaccurate documentation of pharmaceuticals dispensed by nurses. Problems with inaccurate documentation could possibly lead to errors in medical care: wrong medications dispensed, incorrect doses prescribed, or even prescriptions given to the wrong patient. Medication dispensing comes with the responsibility to track the pharmaceuticals. For example, in the case of a recall: one needs to be able to track a dispensed medication through specific



High Level Functions

- Eliminate paper, automate pharmacy workflow
- Eliminate paper processes and tracking
- Print medication labels via EHR (eliminate manual typing)
- Electronic recording of dispensed medications (eliminate paper records)
- Electronic inventory tracking and alerts
- Integrated FPAR annual reporting (including upcoming FPAR 2.0)
- Integrated with the EHR patient record
- Integrated with billing sliding fee scale





lot numbers, to a patient. Similarly, clinics need to be able to track and reconcile inventory. All of these errors could have serious outcomes.

To solve this problem, HCHD working with their part time (supervising) pharmacist, started a search for a pharmacy software to automate the process. Commercial pharmacy software is available on the market, however, these software systems are designed for large standalone pharmacies with dedicated teams. Thus, typical pharmacy systems are expensive for small agencies, are cumbersome to use and these standalone pharmacy software require its own IT infrastructure and associated maintenance.

SOLUTION

To avoid the burden of a separate pharmacy system, HCHD decided to add Patagonia Health's Pharmacy App on to the Electronic Health Record. The Pharmacy App avoided the need for a separate system; the workflow is all integrated within the EHR making it easy for nurses. "Ultimately, we chose Patagonia Health's Pharmacy App because of the ease of documentation of dispensing pharmaceuticals from the pharmacy through the patient's electronic health record" said Edwards. It was a seamless process to add the featured App to their EHR system. Furthermore, since Patagonia Health EHR is web based; there is no need for servers, etc.

The integrated Pharmacy App software solution automates medication (e.g. for family planning or methadone) dispensing, tracking, audit and inventory control. It automates workflow, eliminating manual typing and paper records, and greatly reduces the chance of errors.

BENEFITS

The expected (and desired) key benefit of the Pharmacy App for HCHD was the ease of documentation. "Another specific function we benefited from the Pharmacy App was the ability to create a dispensing log to track pharmaceutical dispensing as verification of the actual pharmaceutical product on the shelf. Adherence to policy and compliance is so much easier with the built in audit trail" said Edwards. "I like how we are able to remotely access the system from another site



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*Helene Edwards, MS, RD,
LDN
Health Director
Hoke County Health
Department*



since we are only physically in the pharmacy 4 to 5 hours each week” adds Kathryn Hostetter, RPh, Pharmacist/Manager, Hoke Pharmacy.

Since the pharmacy dispensing is tracked within the EHR, it is easy to get comprehensive reports showing a complete view of the agency. For example, the required Family Planning Annual Report (FPAR) is accurate and complete. The built-in Pharmacy App will also enable the solution to evolve and keep up with major upcoming changes for FPAR 2.0 (expected in 2017) reporting. Similarly compliance to methadone dispensing becomes much easier.

“This app will help us to track inventory in a much more detailed and efficient manner” said Hostetter. The use of the pharmacy app has already improved the workflow of the HCHD and it has improved access to prescriptions for patients through the electronic Prescriptions feature. In summing it up Edwards says “Now, we have records that indicate better inventory management of pharmaceuticals dispensed by each individual nurse. I will recommend the Pharmacy App to other health department colleagues because the App is so useful and user friendly.”



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