

Illinois Dermatology Institute Improves the Patient Experience with EMA™



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Matthew Harris, MD

Key Benefits:

- Easily achieved Meaningful Use
- Faster and more thorough documentation
- iPad improves the patient experience
- More accurate coding increases revenues
- Cloud-based system delivers flexibility

In 2011, the providers at Illinois Dermatology Institute knew that it was time to move to an electronic medical records (EMR) system. This large group practice, comprised of 27 providers and 144 employees in 13 locations across Illinois and Indiana, had been formed by joining several small practices together. The group felt that moving to an EMR system would be a unifying force. Meaningful Use was also looming and provided additional incentive to find a new solution.

“We evaluated numerous general and dermatology-specific EMR systems over an 18-month period,” noted Dr. Matthew Harris, a dermatologist with the practice. “Unfortunately, many of the systems we evaluated were server-based. We’re a giant group, and we absolutely refused to implement one. We didn’t want to create an on-site technical institute, where we had to pay IT staff to run our servers and troubleshoot problems. That’s not the business we’re in. The server-based systems were also very expensive. We wanted a solution that

was cloud-based, flexible, reasonably priced and didn’t require on-site IT support.”

“Some other systems we reviewed also didn’t seem robust enough,” he noted. “We knew a colleague whose EMR system was undergoing an upgrade. He was going to have to spend many, many hours redoing the templates that he had created. We certainly didn’t want that kind of headache either.”

A Smooth Rollout of EMA

Dr. Harris and his colleagues learned about EMA Dermatology™ and were sold. “We loved the fact that EMA was cloud-based and came complete with built-in medical knowledge,” said Dr. Harris. “We didn’t have to program our own templates or worry about IT support. The system was intuitive and easy-to-use. We rolled it out in the spring of 2011. I started out with EMA gradually, beginning with just a few notes in the first week and then ramping up each week afterwards.”

Meaningful Use Made Easy

“Meaningful Use was one of the main drivers for implementing an EMR system,” said Dr. Harris. “EMA made the whole Meaningful Use attestation process easy for us. At any time, we could run a report in EMA to check our progress against the requirements and

make adjustments. The process went seamlessly and we achieved the maximum incentive possible. We couldn't have attained Meaningful Use without EMA."

Maintaining a Documentation Style, But Better

"I like that with EMA, I didn't have to change my style of documentation," said Dr. Harris. "I feel that having a medical assistant or scribe in the exam room compromises the doctor-patient relationship, so I prefer to be alone in the room when I see my patients. With EMA, I can continue practicing this way. The medical assistant brings the patient back to the exam room, gets the specific HPI, and then comes out and gets me. I enter the exam room and start using EMA on the iPad, documenting what I'm going to be doing and asking questions. I conduct the exam and then make note of what I'm doing. I sometimes finish the note in the room, or other times step outside the door and finish it. With paper charts, I could never finish my note in the room; there was just too much information to write out. I see 30-35 patients a day, and EMA has definitely helped me to go much faster than when I used paper charts. Now, when I finish an exam, I have thorough, well-written notes that I can actually read."

iPad Improves Patient Care

"Using EMA on the iPad has been a huge benefit," continued Dr. Harris. "I'm not sitting in a corner of the room typing away on a computer or laptop. The iPad is so small that it doesn't get in the way of my interaction with my patients. I can still make eye contact with the patient during the visit; it definitely improves the patient's experience. I also very often show patients photos on the iPad using the VisualDx feature of EMA. Seeing the photos really helps patients to understand their condition better. I like to draw on the iPad to help patients visualize what I'm explaining. I can also send a prescription electronically through the iPad. My patients love that."

More Accurate Coding Increases Revenues

"Thanks to EMA's accurate coding capabilities, I feel much more confident in my coding," noted Dr. Harris. "In the past, I was very conservative in my coding. Now, I feel like my codes more accurately reflect the work I've done. My revenues have increased substantially in the last two years, and I think that the more accurate coding of the system has played a huge role in the increase."

Great Information Access, Flexibility and Support

"There are many other aspects of EMA that I enjoy," said Dr. Harris. "For example, the Grand Rounds™ feature is very helpful. I love that for a given diagnosis, I can click on Grand Rounds and see what else other providers have tried. I don't know of any other way to access this kind of information so easily. It's like applying the crowdsourcing idea to dermatology."

"I also like the flexibility of the cloud-based system," he continued. "I recently opened a second office, and it's really nice to not have to physically move charts around. And if a patient happens to come to my second location, I can access their chart from there."

"The support offered by Modernizing Medicine has been outstanding too. I've heard stories where other providers have sometimes waited two weeks to hear back from their EMR vendor. Modernizing Medicine has always been very quick to respond and address any concerns."

A Unifying Solution

"Our group has been very happy with EMA, and having the system in place has definitely been unifying. It's also been an attraction for other providers to join our group. They find it helpful that a great EMR has already been implemented and is working extremely well for the practice."

