ASC Deploys HSTpathways’ Integrated Practice Management System and EHR to Support Commitment to Quality Care

Copper Ridge Surgery Center (CRSC) is a high-volume, multispecialty ambulatory surgery center (ASC) located in Northwest Michigan. CRSC’s team of 100-plus affiliated physicians and anesthesiologists performs more than 20,000 cases annually across 11 specialty areas. Early on in CRSC’s existence, the Center implemented an electronic practice management system to help achieve the Center’s goal of providing safe, high-quality care in an effective, cost-efficient manner. In 2011, CRSC implemented an electronic health record (EHR) system as well. Over time, however, CRSC outgrew these solutions and began to look at alternatives. HSTpathways and HSTeChart now provide CRSC with a high-performance, integrated, web-based solution that supports the Center’s ongoing commitment to high-quality, cost-effective care.
Copper Ridge Surgery Center has a long history of using innovative technologies to enhance patient care. “We are very keen on leveraging technology in whatever form to improve quality and the patient experience,” said Lisa Warren, Quality Assurance Manager, Copper Ridge Surgery Center.

To that end, CRSC was an early adopter of radio-frequency identification (RFID) for patient tracking in the ASC setting. CRSC also implemented an automated medication dispensing system – common in hospitals, but less so in ASCs. So CRSC is no stranger to implementing technology to optimize quality and efficiency.

CRSC has used an electronic practice management system since the Center first opened. They implemented an electronic health record (EHR) system in 2011. “We wanted to be able to focus on quality, not paper and processes,” said Warren. As their electronic practice management and EHR systems aged, however, the Center experienced a worrisome decline in system performance.

“Performance began to be a huge issue,” said Warren. “We had issues with latency. We also had situations where users would actually be kicked off the product and have difficulty getting back on. You can imagine what that is like when you have a patient sitting in front of you. You are trying to focus on the patient but you are dealing with technical difficulties instead.”

Concerns About CRSC’s Legacy Solutions
In addition to problems with performance, such as latency and system reliability, Warren identified four areas of concern the Center had with their original solutions:

- **ON-PREMISE DEPLOYMENT IS YESTERDAY’S TECHNOLOGY**

When CRSC first purchased their electronic practice management system and EHR solutions, on-premise deployment was the standard. The problem with on-premise deployment is that an ASC has to be able to dedicate a high level of time, resources and information technology (IT) expertise to maintain system performance. “We had a lot of technical difficulties when we had our own physical servers, even though we managed it through contracted IT vendor services. We went through losing a server. We went through losing a portion of the storage area network (SAN) – potentially catastrophic events,” said Warren.
• PAINTED INTO A CORNER WITH CUSTOMIZATIONS. The standard functionality and workflow of the Center’s original EHR solution did not align well with CRSC’s workflow. As a result, CRSC resorted to paying for customization. The upside of customization is that you can align functionality precisely with your ASC’s workflow. The downside is that at a certain point, your solution becomes so customized that upgrades to the original software no longer work. “We reached a point where every time they released an upgrade or patch, something on our side would break,” said Warren. “It became more and more difficult to work with their product and have it consistently do what it needed to do.”

• CONCERNS ABOUT DATA INTEGRITY. “Data integrity was an ongoing problem,” said Warren. “In most areas, the system didn’t have controls in place that would prevent one user from deleting or editing another user’s information, particularly within the patient record. When information changed or disappeared, there were not sufficient audit trails to track what was going on.”

• LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS TO REQUESTS FOR ENHANCEMENTS. ASCs, like the rest of the healthcare industry, exist in a rapidly evolving environment. The ideal ASC practice management solution vendor must be adaptable and responsive to change requests. “We would request enhancements to functionality and we would never hear back,” said Warren.

A Rigorous Search and Selection Process
In spite of the problems CRSC was experiencing, the idea of implementing a new system was daunting. “We remembered how painful it was switching from a paper system to an electronic system when we moved to an EHR in 2011,” said Warren. “Our physicians remembered that process so they were skeptical about changing systems. At this point they were used to the system, despite its limitations and faults, and wondered if the change was really necessary. We really had to do our research to convince them the change needed to happen.” CRSC did extensive research on replacement solutions, including offering their existing vendor the opportunity to demonstrate the most current versions of their products. The Center assembled an interdisciplinary team with representatives of each stakeholder group who would be affected by a change in solutions. The team included the business office, registration, clinical representatives from each department, representatives from materials management and all physicians interested in participating.

“Warren created very specific case scenarios and had the vendor finalists demonstrate how each scenario would work. “For example, your case involves a pediatric patient undergoing an ENT procedure and the child is also deaf. I want you to run this patient all the way through, from scheduling to preadmission, through the date of the service, to generating a claim, to receiving payment,” said Warren.

“In the end, we had to choose the solution that was the best fit for us and present it to our physician owners. We chose HSTpathways and HSTeChart because those solutions overcame most of the problems we were experiencing, they were the most intuitive to use and they best met our needs,” said Warren.

HSTpathways and HSTeChart Meet – and Exceed – Expectations
CRSC went live with HSTpathways (the practice management system) and HSTeChart (the EHR) simultaneously in January 2019. By replacing both legacy solutions, CRSC was able to eliminate the concerns and problems that led them to consider changing solutions in the first place. Even better was the fact that features and capabilities in HSTpathways’ solutions provided additional benefits.

Warren identified six areas in which CRSC has experienced benefits since implementing HSTpathways and HSTeChart:

• THE WEB-BASED, HOSTED DESIGN HAS ELIMINATED MANY OF THE PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ON-PREMISE DEPLOYMENT. “With on-premise deployment, there are so many uncontrollable variables at play,” said Warren. “But with HSTpathways’ hosted solution, they are able to provide consistency in a way that supports a high level of performance. The difference in performance between our on-premise system and HSTpathways’ hosted solution has been like night and day.”

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- LISA WARREN, Quality Assurance Manager, Copper Ridge Surgery Center
CASE STUDY

• **HSTeChart OFFERS A BALANCE BETWEEN STANDARD FUNCTIONALITY AND CUSTOMIZATION.** “HSTpathways offers a blend of well-thought-out functionality appropriate to the ASC industry and our regulatory environment,” said Warren. “At the same time, it gives you enough flexibility to customize it to your workflow.” For example, HSTeChart is designed using a modular system called Basic Level of Charting (BLOC™). This flexibility enables the Center to define charts and workflows that work best for them, without sacrificing the ability to take advantage of upgrades to standard functionality. “The autonomy and control we have with HSTeChart is one of my favorite things about it,” said Warren.

• **HSTeChart IS INTUITIVE TO USE.** “A common complaint about EHRs is clinical staff end up spending too much time trying to use the EHR and not enough time with the patient,” said Warren. “That is not true with this product. HSTeChart is so intuitive to use that our clinical staff is able to give the patients the time they need and deserve, rather than focusing their attention on the device or the system. That is a definite benefit.”

• **HSTpathways AND HSTeChart HAVE A RESPONSIVE PROCESS FOR TIMELY PRODUCT ENHANCEMENTS BASED ON USER FEEDBACK.** HSTpathways created an ‘ideas’ portal, where users can submit suggestions for product enhancements. Fellow users can vote and comment on each suggestion. In addition, after the suggestions have been reviewed, the company posts the status of each suggestion – whether it is under review, a planned enhancement, or has been incorporated into the latest release. “HSTpathways is clearly committed to leveraging user feedback to make their products better,” said Warren. “The platform they have put together for soliciting, prioritizing and acting on user feedback is fantastic. It’s not like anything I have experienced before.”

“Working with HSTpathways has been a pleasure. The solutions work ... the facility staff are happy and the physicians are happy. I couldn’t have asked for a better outcome.”

- LISA WARREN, Quality Assurance Manager, Copper Ridge Surgery Center

• **HSTpathways AND HSTeChart INCLUDE FUNCTIONS, LIKE TASK MANAGER, WHICH ENHANCE WORKFLOW EFFICIENCY.** “In HSTeChart, Task Manager performs a nightly scrub on all charts and identifies any incomplete required fields or documentation,” said Warren. “It then creates a task that can be accessed by the provider or the user, with a link that takes them right to the spot in the chart that needs attention. It doesn’t get much easier than that! Task Manager is one of our favorite features.”

About HSTpathways

**HSTpathways** is a top-ranked, cloud-based ambulatory surgery center software company dedicated to serving the ASC industry. HSTpathways was named KLAS Category Leader for Ambulatory Surgical Center Solutions in the “2018 Best in KLAS: Software & Services” report. Clients include more than 750 organizations such as freestanding ambulatory surgery centers and ASC-hospital joint ventures, as well as 50 multi-facility corporate enterprises. HSTpathways provides the most trusted enterprise software management solution available to the ASC industry. HSTpathways offers specialized software solutions to help ASC organizations achieve efficiencies with surgical scheduling, supply chain management, EHR clinical workflows, medical coding, insurance and patient billing, and accounts receivable collections. For more information, visit www.HSTpathways.com.

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