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Outsourcing EHR Solutions: TeamPraxis

Outsourcing EHR Solutions: TeamPraxis Takes Hawaii by Storm with Ground-Breaking Outsourced Physician Services

Similar to the rest of the nation, the State of Hawaii faces several challenges in sustaining its healthcare system into the future. The broad national problems are well-documented – deteriorating service quality troublingly coupled with rising prices – and largely the result of a long history of national industry competition and reform measures geared towards cost-savings, as opposed to patient value or outcomes.¹ Hawaii’s specific challenges are also influenced by its unique geographic isolation, located thousands of miles away from any other land, as well as its exceedingly large and growing aging population, both of which have resulted in several market inefficiencies. In fact, some local industry experts have dubbed Hawaii’s healthcare industry’s looming financial crisis as, “A Perfect Storm.”

As the largest healthcare Software as a Service (SaaS) provider in the state, TeamPraxis is helping to turn the tide of this problem by offering innovative and useful information technology tools to assist and support island physicians, significantly reducing practice costs and empowering them to focus their efforts on providing the highest possible level of care to their patients.

TeamPraxis provides a wide range of physician community services targeted specifically to Hawaii’s unique business needs, from outsourced and application leasing services – including billing, Web-based communications, claims processing, e-prescribing, electronic health records (EHRs), and practice management – to the ongoing development of an independent, integrated business network for physicians. According to President and CEO Creighton Arita, the company’s vision is to “transform our nation’s healthcare delivery system by establishing a new, one-point model for communication, information access and connectivity throughout the healthcare community.”

Developing and promoting the widespread use of EHRs, specifically, is seen as a critical step in transforming the way in which Hawaii’s physicians practice. Many organizations throughout the country have successfully explored hosted solutions for ambulatory EHRs, and are paving the way for others to reap similar benefits. In Hawaii, TeamPraxis has set new standards for outsourcing vendors, and is establishing a new paradigm for EHR implementation among small physician practices.

INSURER INITIATIVE TEAMS ALLSCRIPTS AND TEAMPRAXIS

In 2005, the Hawaii Medical Services Association (HMSA) – representing the state’s “Blue” insurers – recognized the company’s industry leadership by inviting TeamPraxis to participate in a new initiative to fund ambulatory EHRs. The innovative program was designed to leverage HMSA’s e-prescribing initiative, which had been running successfully since 2000. HMSA had previously selected Allscripts as its vendor of choice for the ongoing e-prescribing program – specifically, the TouchWorks™ Rx+ module.

Beginning with a five-office pilot program, this initiative sought to determine whether physicians would be able to make the transition to an electronic system comfortably and effectively, if the cost barrier was mitigated. In a move unprecedented in the U.S. healthcare system, HMSA offered TeamPraxis 50% of its funding – \$10 million – to accelerate the adoption of hosted TouchWorks EHR solutions among island physicians. “Cost has always been the major hurdle for individual practitioners,” says Arita, “But we wanted to know if the cost issue was reduced, would they still find an EHR attractive?”

Pilot sites were primarily single-physician or small-group practices, which make up nearly 65% of provider practices nationwide.

¹ For a more complete treatment of this concept, see Michael Porter’s and Elizabeth Teisberg’s *Redefining Health Care: Creating Value-Based Competition and Results* (Harvard Business School Press: 2006).



“Our vision is to transform our nation’s healthcare delivery system by establishing a new, one-point model for communication, information access and connectivity throughout the healthcare community.”

Creighton Arita
President & Chief Executive Officer
TeamPraxis

TeamPraxis Overview

- ▶ Established in 1992
- ▶ Largest physician service organization in Hawaii
- ▶ Staff of 120 people
- ▶ 13 Certified Professional Coders and 50 full time contractors
- ▶ Serves 1000 providers throughout the State, mostly small 1-5 doctor practices

Key TeamPraxis Capabilities

- ▶ Full EHR and PM Software as a Service
- ▶ Secured Data Center
- ▶ Blade Center with SAN Technology
- ▶ Network Connectivity, Communications and Internet Access
- ▶ Disaster Recovery
- ▶ 24/7 System Monitoring
- ▶ Load Balancing and Database Cluster Environment
- ▶ Data Protection and Backup

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222 Merchandise Mart, Suite 2024
Chicago, IL 60654 | 1.800.654.0889

www.allscripts.com



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Arita was delighted by HMSA's choice of EHR vendor. "A company lives and dies behind its leadership, and the Allscripts team is clearly exceptional," he says. "Allscripts combines financial stability and critical mass in healthcare markets with a clear focus on applications in the clinical space. Allscripts is also committed to community connectivity and interoperability solutions, which brings our two companies into perfect alignment." Arita also notes that the TouchWorks EHR solution provided a natural and simplified upgrade path for physicians who were already participating in the e-prescribing program.

PILOT PROGRAM OUTPERFORMS EXPECTATIONS

This pilot proved to be a resounding success, and the participating physicians have unanimously and enthusiastically provided strong testimonials to the efficiency and power of the TouchWorks solution. According to these physicians, the greatest advantage of the electronic system was that patient information was instantly available, complete and legible, which redefined and transformed practices, enhancing their quality of life while also reducing stress at the office by providing a simpler way to comply with payer requirements and protocols.

Physicians also repeatedly stated that the EHR improved the quality of patient care, allowing them to become proactive with preventive screening and disease management. "These EHR solutions strongly impact the way physicians practice medicine," says Arita. "Just think of the immediacy of the information—being able to see at a glance how many of your diabetes patients have blood pressure and cholesterol levels out of the acceptable range, and knowing that you can respond appropriately much more quickly than before."

EHR SUCCESS GENERATES NEW CLIENTS, EXPANDED SERVICES

The tremendous success of the pilot quickly carried over into phase two of the process, as TeamPraxis started approaching providers throughout Hawaii with the idea of adopting an HMSA-certified, hosted EHR solution. By June 2007, the company had already achieved its EHR adoption goals for the entire year, enlisting 100 local physicians.

Furthermore, the EHR has attracted a large number of new clients in addition to expanding the scope of current clients' services. "We're scheduling implementations at a rate of nine or ten a month," says Arita. "As the early adopters generate results and testimonials, it will have an effect on the whole community, drawing in the more conservative practices that are taking a wait-and-see attitude."

INTEGRATED ALLSCRIPTS AND TEAMPRAXIS APPLICATIONS

Many clients who use the hosted TouchWorks EHR also rely on TeamPraxis' practice management solutions. The company has built and provided a seamless interface between its own applications and the Allscripts system, so that information received by one platform is automatically delivered to the other. The bi-directional interface ensures complete consistency throughout the continuum of care, from registration and scheduling to patient visits, lab work, and home medications. It also reduces rework at physician sites, freeing up time, ensuring accuracy, and helping to prevent errors.

According to CTO Mark Uranaka, "The ability to integrate services on many levels is a big key to our success. It means that we can offer physicians all the benefits of the TouchWorks EHR, multiplied by the efficiency and convenience of one-point data access over the Web. From the desktop or laptop, home or at the office, physicians can instantly see information of almost any type related to a patient's demographics, treatment, medical background, medications, payment history and appointment schedule."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE GROWTH

The gradual adoption of EHRs among Hawaii physicians will not only result in increasing practice efficiency and a reduction of healthcare costs, but it also has the potential to substantially improve the care patients receive throughout the state, as physicians will be endowed with the tools and access to information necessary to shift their practices to a proactive and preventive approach to disease management.

Arita is passionate about the long-term potential for the partnership between TeamPraxis and Allscripts. "We're going through the most exciting time in our corporate history," he says. "Everything we've envisioned is coming to pass with the HMSA initiatives and our relationship with Allscripts. By seeding EHRs throughout physician practices here in Hawaii, we hope to create a powerful foundation for a nationally integrated community of caregivers. In fact, companies on the U.S. mainland can take advantage of this opportunity by encouraging hosted EHR solutions in their own regions as well."

TeamPraxis has already begun to leverage this partnership through its current pilot program to support physician involvement in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' new Physician Quality Reporting Initiative, which provides a financial incentive for physicians to participate in a voluntary quality reporting program. TeamPraxis created and developed an innovative automated reporting system, which incorporates TouchWorks EHR, its own practice management system and lab result data, aggregating all of the clinical data into a central, accessible warehouse. The system not only helps physicians earn the CMS financial bonus with minimal additional demands on themselves or their office staff, but it also provides the physicians with actionable, real-time patient information to help them offer enhanced preventative and disease management care to their patients.

Because this system is modular and can be easily expanded to other payers and quality initiatives, as well as registry-based reporting, it is already drawing interest from other practices and physician groups across the country.

By integrating the TouchWorks system into its own innovative solutions, TeamPraxis is continuing to assist physicians throughout Hawaii and the United States improve their practices and reduce their operating costs, leading to exciting growth within the company.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS



"Electronic medical records has allowed us to be much more thorough in our documentation. We are more effective communicators with everyone that's involved in patient care. That enables us to be more comprehensive in what we do for our patients."

**Dr. Carla Nip-Sakamoto,
Dermatology**