

■ ProVation[®] MD

Leading the way in procedure documentation and coding



CASE STUDY

HARMONY SURGERY CENTER FINDS DOCUMENTATION AND CODING SOLUTION ACROSS SPECIALTIES

Harmony Surgery Center in Fort Collins, CO embodies a commitment to performance standards and patient satisfaction – two of the hallmarks of success in the Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) market. The multi-specialty surgery center prides itself on overall efficiency and the quality of patient care and experience. And in its Gastroenterology and Pain Management Centers, it has been using ProVation[®] MD software for documentation and coding compliance to help it achieve these objectives.

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PROGRESSIVE MANAGEMENT, PROGRESSIVE MDS

Opened in 2000 as a joint venture between the Poudre Valley Hospital and local physicians, Harmony Surgery Center is part of a comprehensive medical campus that combines physician offices, a cardiac cath lab, imaging services, urgent care, laboratory services, a breast diagnostic center and a cancer center. The multi-specialty campus model allows for greater efficiency and a more seamless, convenient patient experience throughout the continuum of care.

In 2000, electronic documentation systems were still fairly new to the health care market, yet Harmony’s Center for Gastroenterology decided – before the facility’s doors had even opened – to forgo traditional dictation/transcription in favor of procedure documentation and coding compliance software from ProVation Medical, Inc. In terms of health care IT adoption, this decision put Harmony well ahead of the curve.



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ProVation MD software allows Harmony’s physicians to create clinical notes immediately after the procedure. The physicians make selections from a series of medical content-driven menus that emulate typical procedural workflow and automatically adapt to each piece of information that’s selected. Their selections are then expanded into detailed clinical notes with the appropriate CPT and ICD codes and CCI edits. The software interfaces with the scopes used during the procedure, allowing the physician to attach and incorporate any relevant images into the body of the note.



Finally, post-procedure orders, patient instructions, referring physician letters and other auxiliary documents are automatically created and populated with relevant patient information. Rebecca Craig, Harmony Surgery Center’s Administrator, was intimately involved in the implementation of the software, as well as its ongoing use. Because she oversees all of Harmony’s medical specialties, she has an excellent perspective on the difference between dictated procedure records and those produced by ProVation. “The greatest benefit that I see is the speed and the streamlined workflow,” she says.

“People aren’t touching a piece of paper 100 times to get it where it needs to go. The op report prints immediately at the GI office and the nurses’ station, and because the note is e-signed, doctors don’t need to make separate trips to medical records to sign off on charts. Coders don’t have to wait for transcription services – they’ve got immediate access to the finished note.”

Craig also sees a positive impact on both patient throughput and the overall patient experience. “We move patients through and discharge faster, because we’re not chasing doctors to write down post-op instructions or discharge orders,” she says. “And the doctors like that they’re able to send specific, automatic written instructions home with the patient – the instructions are personalized and automatically populated from the note, which saves time and lends a nice touch to the overall patient experience.” Dr. Mark Durkan, a gastroenterologist who began practicing at the surgery center in 2002, prefers using the ProVation software to dictating. “With dictation, you can’t go back or make changes – once you’ve dictated, your documentation is out of your hands,” he says. “With the software, you can go over your notes before signing them and tweak the verbiage or make sure you’ve captured everything you want to say. I’ve used a couple of documentation systems, and this is definitely the best.”

LEVERAGING THE MULTI-SPECIALTY PLATFORM

Like many ASCs, Harmony Surgery Center encompasses several medical specialties, including Pain Management. So when ProVation released its Pain Management software in 2003, it made sense to Craig to leverage the multi-specialty software platform. Due to the relative complexity of Pain Management coding – and the amount of detail required to document these cases completely – she was also looking for a way to safeguard against coding errors and non-compliance.

When weighing the purchase of the Pain Management software, Craig considered the financial upside of eliminating dictation and transcription and streamlining documentation, coding and billing workflows. A cost-benefit analysis showed an immediate elimination of close to \$1,000 per month in transcription costs, plus a projected patient throughput increase of 20 cases per month. Based on the experience of the GI department, Craig and her team were able to comfortably estimate a time savings of 15 minutes of coder time per case, as well as significant RN and Medical Records time savings. With the nationwide shortage of both coders and nurses, the added efficiency – gained simply from eliminating the wasted steps that go along with manually documenting, signing and finalizing procedure notes – was a critical factor in the evaluation process.

Finally, the decision to implement ProVation's Pain Management software was based in large part on the positive relationship the surgery center had formed with the company over the years. Mark Bingaman, who works as an IT Applications Specialist for the Harmony Ambulatory Surgical Center, attributes his satisfaction to the service and follow-through provided by ProVation's support team and product managers. "I view our clinicians as my clients, and I put a high value on making their needs a priority and keeping them in the loop whenever an IT problem or change may affect them," he says. "I'm treated by the ProVation representatives in the same way. The company shows an openness and a commitment to getting problems resolved that is rare among IT vendors."

"Pain management is a very high revenue generator. The software allows us to bill properly for the services we perform – and that makes a large bottom-line difference for an independent surgery center like ours."

TAKING THE PAIN OUT OF DOCUMENTATION

Harmony implemented ProVation MD Pain Management software upon the product's debut, and upgraded to a newer, more mature version in June 2004.

Throughout that time, the company worked with Harmony's Pain Management physicians to expand the software's medical content and ensure that it met their needs and expectations. "Dr. Thomas Boylan, our head Pain Management specialist, is a 'head-to-toe' documenter – he prefers his documentation to be as extensive and thorough as possible," explains Craig. "At first, the software didn't exactly match his workflow, and a portion of the medical content and verbiage was at odds with his documentation style. The ProVation representatives took our concerns and requests seriously – and immediately drafted a plan to make changes."

Bingaman concurs. "Our feeling was that a lot of people at ProVation took the time to listen to our concerns and were committed to our satisfaction," he says. "They spent the time working with us and developing additional medical content, and the product has matured and grown significantly in the past few years." Overall, the experience was positive enough that Harmony recently agreed to serve as a test site for ProVation's General Surgery product, due in early 2006.

Dr. Boylan is frank about both the pros and cons of using the software instead of dictating his procedures. "When we first started using the system, the way in which selected items and descriptions populated the note was at odds with my personal dictation style – it just didn't flow in a manner that worked for me," he recalls. "The situation improved dramatically when I started working with (ProVation product manager) Craig Moriarty. With Craig's clinical background, he was able to grasp what I wanted to say in a medical context, and help translate my needs into a technological framework."

Boylan is quick to point out that his needs vary quite a bit from those of the average Pain specialist. "Because I do a lot of medical consulting on legal cases and am called upon frequently to give depositions, the procedures I perform and the level and breadth of detail I'm required to document are rather unusual," he admits. "I would estimate that only 15 percent of pain management centers are doing these types of procedures. For the other 85 percent of procedures and centers, this product is a very good fit."

Overall, Boylan sees the big-picture benefits of replacing dictation and transcription with software that streamlines workflow and ensures correct coding and reimbursement. "You have to look at the whole system before formulating an opinion," he states. "Yes, it can take me longer to document many of my cases on ProVation than it would to dictate them. But when you consider the other pieces that are automated – billing and coding, discharge instructions, charting, medical records – you see how much money and time are saved overall."

He finds the financial benefits of the software equally compelling. "You have to lay out capital for the ProVation system up front, but once it's paid for, it's paid for. Dictation and transcription costs are ongoing – if you continue down that route, you're never done with them," he says. "Plus, Pain Management is a very high revenue generator. The software allows us to bill properly for the services we perform – and that makes a large bottomline difference for an independent surgery center like ours."