Supporting Advanced Telemedicine throughout a Mountainous Region

Key benefits/outcomes
- Patient engagement, with women unable to travel to appointments receiving care comparable to in-clinic care
- Practice efficiency improvements through the elimination of paper charts and more uniform charting across multiple providers and locations
- Improved billing/reimbursement with telemedicine revenue cycles nearly matching those of in-office patient billing
- A platform ready to support anticipated progress toward more mobile/portable medicine

Solutions featured
PrimeSUITE

Challenge
Since 2009, Regional Obstetrical Consultants has operated the Solutions to Obstetrics in Rural Counties (STORC) project, a telemedicine program that delivers care in rural areas to women with at-risk pregnancies who would otherwise have little or no access to greatly needed, high-risk care.

“For the first two years, STORC outreach was paper-based, with an EMR that couldn’t connect from remote sites,” recalled Deborah Lance, director of operations. “Caregivers had to work from paper charts at remote locations and open new charts that had to be keyed in later. It was not at all optimal for delivering coordinated, quality care.” With ROC’s five providers seeing all patients for telemedicine appointments, paper charting caused substantial confusion and difficulties in verification for billing.

Solution
To address these issues, ROC replaced its old system with Greenway® PrimeSUITE® in early 2011. PrimeSUITE now works in concert with Cisco TelePresence and an imaging system specific to high-risk pregnancies. Now, patient records are available at any office and telemedicine clinic, including new records generated remotely at telemedicine sites that are then shared with doctors at the home office for completion and signoff.

“‘We’re so grateful to be able to deliver state-of-the-art service to our region, and have great respect for the systems including PrimeSUITE that allow us to do it so seamlessly,’” Lance said.

Results
With electronic health records available whenever needed across ROC’s 12 locations, the STORC project now enjoys complete unification of its entire, geographically dispersed practice, with benefits for caregivers and the patients they serve.

Improved care access — Patients in the region served by ROC face tremendous obstacles in accessing specialized care, including the emotional stress of travel to an urban center and a frequent lack of transportation and financial means to make the trips. These barriers have been virtually eliminated by bringing care to the patient, and referrals have increased dramatically.
Delivering quality care — With template-unified charting across providers and EHRs available wherever needed, access to information is driving the delivery of the best care possible for ROC. “We now make vital patient information immediately available throughout rural areas during telemedicine visits,” Lance said. “There is absolutely no diminishing factor for the patient receiving care via telemedicine.”

Practice efficiency — Efficiency in outreach has increased tremendously with PrimeSUITE’s elimination of paper charting. Telemedicine clinics and remote offices communicate over secure, virtual private networks with maternal-fetal medicine specialists in the home office. PrimeSUITE delivers real-time EHR access over the same link carrying ultrasound images.

Improved billing/reimbursement — With higher-quality electronic information driving the billing process, ROC now sees a near-match in telemedicine billing and in-office patient billing. “The initial outlay of funds for the STORC project was provided by grants, but we are certainly growing closer to being able to sustain the staff, travel expenses and other operational costs from reimbursements generated by the project,” Lance stated.

Mobile-ready — “Technology is so integrated in what we do, and we believe telemedicine will become increasingly mobile,” she noted. “One day, mobile caregivers may see patients face-to-face and check hospital records all from a tablet. Portability is so important when patients are so geographically dispersed.”

Learn more...
about how Greenway customers are using our solutions to coordinate and improve cost-effective, high-quality care. See our website at www.greenwayhealth.com or email us at info@greenwayhealth.com.