

Case Study



Commonwealth Counseling Association Richmond, Virginia

Situation

Commonwealth Counseling Associates (www.commonwealthcounseling.com) is a mental health practice with three offices in the Richmond, Virginia area. The group, founded in 2001 by a group of clinicians formerly associated with the Medical College of Virginia's Department of Psychiatry, today employs 26 clinicians and 15 administrative staff. Like most medical practices, Commonwealth relied on a paper-based system to store files related to patient records, billing and insurance. After several months, the group's executive director, Dr. James Bullock realized that an electronic document management system (EDMS) was needed to increase efficiency and reduce administrative costs.

Solution

"We were literally drowning in paper," Bullock says. "We had thousands of pieces of paper that had to be filed – it was really an amazing array of documents, including paper charts for each patient, related clinical data, correspondence, forms, and insurance documents." As one example of the amount of paper that Bullock and his colleagues had to deal with, he says that insurance Explanation of Benefits reports can run up to 35 pages and have to be kept on file and readily available to ensure reimbursement. "It was a nightmare, and I realized pretty quickly that we needed a better system."

After doing an Internet search, Bullock discovered the eDrawer EDMS and began using the system to store patients' medical records and charts. "We saw immediate improvement," he says. "It was lean and flexible. It is very well designed and conceptualized. I was impressed that I could tailor the application to my needs. As an added bonus, eDrawer's customer service and technical support was terrific. We've been using eDrawer since 2001, and it has truly transformed our business." By 2003, Commonwealth was using eDrawer to manage all of its documentation that had previously been stored as paper.

Results

According to Dr. Bullock, there have been several tangible benefits to using eDrawer:

"In many practices, each doctor requires his or her own administrative assistant to prepare, update and file documents. Because of the ease and speed of retrieving information, eDrawer saves us thousands of dollars in administrative costs associated with handling paper documentation; here we have the equivalent of two and a half full-time equivalents (FTE) for all of our clinicians. In fact, most of our filing is done remotely by one admin who is out on maternity leave and works from home. eDrawer has helped us create a healthier and more flexible workplace and significantly boost morale."

Bullock also notes that Commonwealth has also been able to reduce its overhead costs. "Before eDrawer was fully up and running I bought a single patient chart filing cabinet for \$1200 – and we filled it in just a few months. We had so much paper that we would have needed to relocate just to get enough office space to store the records!"

Another benefit of using eDrawer is the ease of completing audits for insurance companies. "One insurer required an enormous amount of information from our clinicians for its annual audit. With 26 doctors, you can imagine it's quite a mammoth project to get these pieces of paper together. In order to do the audit I went to the "records sent" folder and created a pdf in an afternoon. We did it in a tenth of the time that would have been required with paper."

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