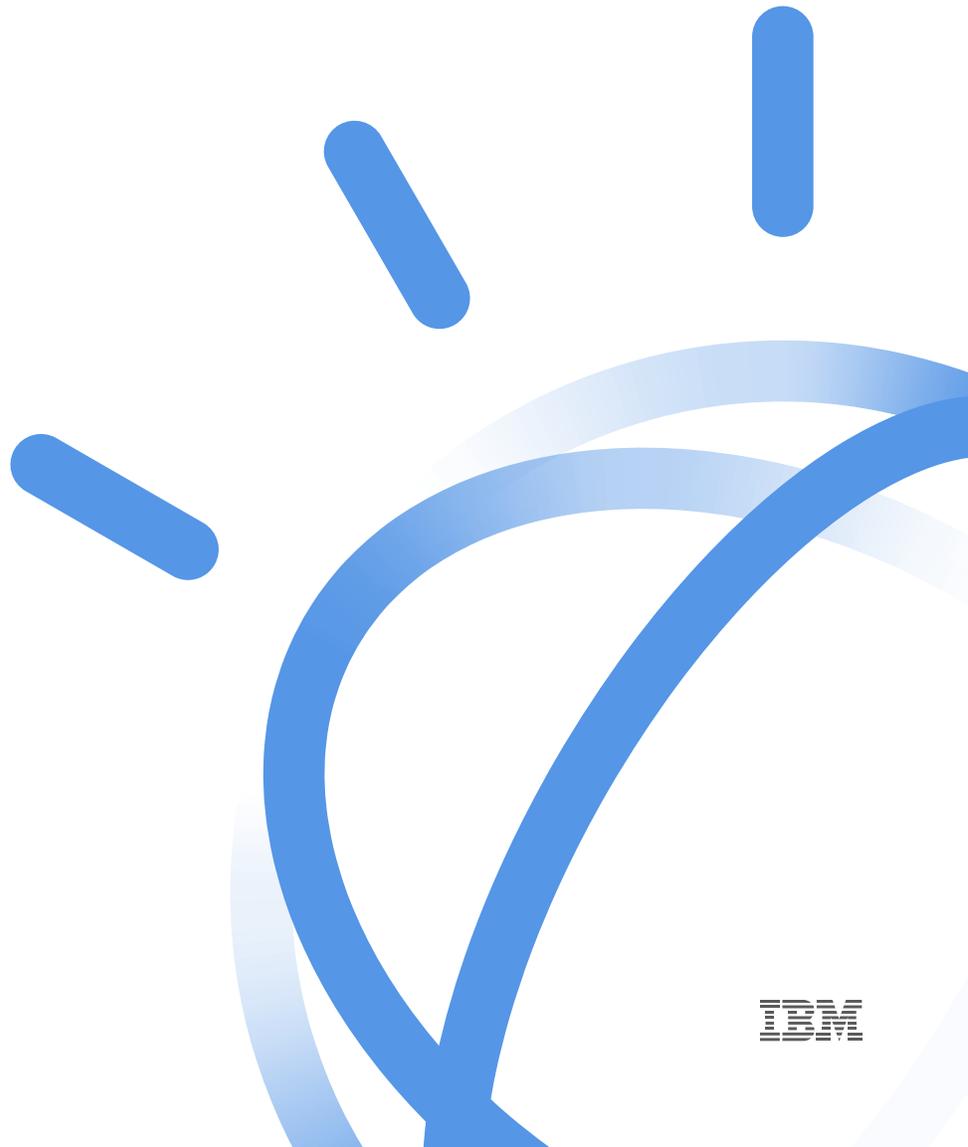


Huntsville Hospital Health System

Huntsville Hospital Physician
Network (Huntsville) leverages
Watson Health™ to ease its
transition to value-based care



Overview

The need

Huntsville needed to change the way technology was being used across their five primary care practices and 21 PCPs that comprise the Huntsville Hospital Physician Network, including taking steps to prepare for value-based contracts and earn PCMH NCQA recognition

The solution

Huntsville used the Watson Health platform to standardize data input to help improve the accuracy of the measurements used to win value-based contracts, identify and help fill in patient care gaps on a more proactive basis, and help ensure all patient-related information was being captured and entered into its EMR properly, even from outside the network

The benefit

Huntsville has increased the following percentages: eligible patients completing mammograms from 61 percent to 70 percent; diabetic patients having a yearly diabetic foot exam from 50 percent to 60 percent; diabetic patients having a yearly diabetic eye exam from 26 percent to 40 percent

The Huntsville Hospital Health System is located in Huntsville, Alabama. Originally founded in 1895, today the health system is the third-largest publicly owned hospital system in the nation with more than 1,800 beds and 12,000 employees. It is also a teaching facility for the University of Alabama at Birmingham's (UAB) Family Practice and Internal Medicine Residency Programs. The Huntsville Hospital Physician Network is an important component of this health system.

Succeeding in the new world of value-based care requires a significant change in approach for many providers. Rather than focusing solely on the patients in front of them that day, they must take a broader view of their entire patient panels. A key strategy in this transition is the incorporation of population health management (PHM) principles. Achieving PHM not only requires reviewing the information contained in electronic medical records (EMRs) but also verifying documentation from both internal and external providers is accurate and up-to-date..

While the Huntsville Hospital Physician Network does not currently have any value-based contracts in place, executives there recognize such contracts are an important consideration for the future. As a result, the organization has been taking steps to earn patient-centered medical home (PCMH) recognition from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in the near future.

One of those steps was the acquisition of the Watson Health platform to enable provider-led, scalable PHM. The implementation was greatly expanded after Huntsville received a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Improvement (CMMI) grant and added two very active and vocal clinician advocates to the team. Huntsville began using the Watson Health platform in its primary care physician (PCP) offices to help ensure all their patient-related information was being entered into its EMR properly and to capture information from providers outside the network. Through these efforts, Huntsville was able to increase the percentage of its diabetic population that is receiving yearly foot and eye exams. The PHM program was also able to increase the success rate for eligible patients completing mammogram screenings for breast cancer.

On the wellness side, for the first time ever, Huntsville not only met but exceeded a Medicare payer's goal for yearly "360" Comprehensive Assessments, which includes providing a wellness visit and completing a health management report on their patients. In addition, the Watson Health solution helped identify and solve documentation issues on the part of the Huntsville team, which helped the percentage of physicians meeting internal goals on the quality scorecards to increase significantly. These initial forays into PHM are helping spur further improvements, and accelerating Huntsville's plans to move ahead with applying for PCMH recognition and value-based contracts.

Solution components

Software

- IBM® Phytel Outreach
- IBM® Phytel Insight
- IBM® Phytel Coordinate
- IBM® Phytel Remind

“We’ve found the (Phytel) patient summaries to be useful in tracking patient histories with graphs of their BMI, blood pressure, HbA1c tests, cholesterol and other information. Having the summaries available allows our physicians to see how patients are trending and alert them to developing issues before they become legitimate problems that require more serious interventions. An added benefit is patients like seeing how they’re trending over time as well. It provides a great perspective, especially in the context of improving wellness.”

– James Morrison, Jr., MD, Physician Care at
Huntsville Hospital Physician Network

The need to know more

Known as “The Rocket City” for its contributions to the US space program and military, Huntsville, Alabama is used to being on the leading edge of innovation. The same holds true for the Huntsville Hospital Health System, of which the Huntsville Hospital Physician Network is a component.

Huntsville Hospital Health System recently realized it needed to change the way technology was being used across the five primary care practices and 21 PCPs that comprise the Huntsville Hospital Physician Network. Amy Yearwood, RN, MSN, is the Network’s Clinical Care Coordinator.

“We had an EMR, but it was difficult to run reports in it to see if we were meeting our performance goals,” says Yearwood. “It had limited data fields so you could only look for two or three metrics at a time.”

A second issue was the way patient data was being entered into the EMR, explains James Morrison, Jr., MD, the Huntsville physician who championed the extensive use of the Watson Health platform.

“We had fragmented ways of documenting different histories within our system, particularly when it came to preventive care and measures related to specific conditions,” Morrison said. “We struggled to identify care gaps in patients. Often data would be entered as free text, so even if physicians were doing the right things it might not show up in the reports.”

With plans to move more actively into PHM and eventually attain PCMH recognition from the NCQA, they needed to find a solution that could help them overcome these issues and set them on the right course – and the solution happened to be already within their walls.

Standardizing data input drives improvement

Huntsville had previously purchased and implemented the Watson Health platform in June of 2013, using it sparingly for a year.

The use of the Watson Health platform accelerated after Huntsville secured a CMMI grant, Yearwood was hired and Dr. Morrison emerged as the physician champion within the organization. One of the first initiatives Huntsville took on was using the Watson Health platform to spot and solve data issues within the EMR.

“If clinicians aren’t documenting consistently within the EMR, such as entering data into unstructured fields, the PHM technology doesn’t know to search, and the results will be incorrect,” Yearwood says. “We wanted one consolidated area for our providers’ documentation and knew if we focused on those areas and had the language written in the background that our data extraction would be far more accurate.”

The Watson Health platform was used to remap the data, and Huntsville conducted workshops to educate clinicians on precisely where data should be entered. Once that process was complete, the accuracy of the measurements improved dramatically, putting Huntsville in a much better position to take on value-based contracts. It impacted the physicians’ impressions of the quality scorecards as well.

“One of the unforeseen but important concepts is that not every provider is initially engaged or willing to adopt changes. By engaging staff we found successes and quick wins that provided proof to skeptical providers. Phytel has been a big contributor in helping us generate those wins.”

– James Morrison, Jr., MD, Physician Care at
Huntsville Hospital Physician Network

“Our physicians initially felt the quality scores they were receiving weren’t accurate or reflective of the work they were doing,” Yearwood states. “Because the data is now being picked up properly, our physicians have more confidence in the scores we’re providing.”

Filling the care gaps

Huntsville had attempted to identify and fill care gaps proactively through its EMR, but found it was a struggle.

“The information wasn’t documented in the EMR,” says Yearwood. “Instead, there was a very small tab called Protocol Results. Most of our clinicians couldn’t find the information easily within their normal workflow.”

That changed once Huntsville began using the Watson Health platform to generate reports. Each month Yearwood sends a report to each physician identifying care gaps for the patients they are seeing that month. Nurses then call those patients to close those gaps ahead of or in conjunction with their scheduled visits. In addition, each office runs a report – either in the morning or the previous evening – that is used as part of the daily huddle.

“If we don’t get the patient caught up ahead of time, we can catch any gaps while they’re in front of us,” Yearwood says. “It’s much easier and less time-consuming than following up with them afterward to confirm they’ve scheduled tests and had them completed.”

One area where this effort has had a noticeable impact is in breast cancer screenings. In the year between May 2015 and March 2016, the percentage of eligible patients who had received mammograms jumped from 61 percent to 70 percent (2,480 patients to 2,858 patients, out of 4,066 total).

The Watson Health platform has had an impact on the entire workflow of the huddles as well as the visits themselves. In some instances, the workflows have been altered so standing orders for virtually any gaps to be filled are already present before the physician enters the exam room.

Seeing trends over time

Another way Huntsville is using the Watson Health platform is by generating printed summaries of patient information for office visits that show the previous vital signs and test results. They also identify care gaps, which leads to more conversations about closing those gaps.

“We’ve found the patient summaries to be useful in tracking patient histories with graphs of their BMI, blood pressure and other information,” says Dr. Morrison. “Having the summaries available allows our physicians to see how patients are trending and alert them to developing issues before they require more serious interventions. An added benefit is patients like seeing how they’re trending over time.”

“Our physicians initially felt the quality scores they were receiving weren’t accurate or reflective of the work they were doing. Because the data is now being picked up properly (as a result of changes driven by Phytel) our physicians have more confidence in the scores we’re providing.”

– Amy Yearwood, RN, BSN, Clinical Care
Coordinator for the Huntsville Hospital
Physician Network

Documenting services from outside providers

Even as PCPs are getting better about documenting their own services, many are still challenged to include those fulfilled by outside providers.

To resolve this issue, Dr. Morrison had Huntsville’s IT department create a custom records request form based on the deficiencies identified by the Watson Health platform. The form is used by medical assistants to gather colonoscopy reports from gastroenterologists and colorectal surgeons, mammogram reports from various imaging centers, pap smear results from gynecologists, etc., and enter that data into the EMR.

“We quickly learned that although many tests needed to be ordered and scheduled, many others had been done already. They just hadn’t been clearly or adequately documented,” says Dr. Morrison.

Attributions for wellness programs

The more Huntsville uses the Watson Health platform the more uses it is finding for it. For example, a Medicare Advantage payer set a goal for getting physicians to bring patients in for a “360” Comprehensive Assessment. To receive the incentive payment, providers had to secure a completion rate of at least 60 percent by June 30.

Expansions continue

Two additional programs demonstrate the value Watson Health is bringing.

The first program involves teaching the office staff the principles and metrics around being a PCMH. While the program is still in its early stages, Dr. Morrison says the use of morning huddles and patient summaries to make physicians aware of missing diabetic foot exams is already paying dividends.

“In my office alone we have gone from 47 percent of our diabetics having yearly foot exams to 80 percent (177 patients out of 220 total),” he relates. “As a group, our practices have improved from 50 percent to 60 percent (improving to 1,419 patients out of 2,368 total).”

Similarly, yearly eye exams in diabetics have also increased to 40 percent program-wide (958 patients out of 2,373 total).

The other program involves working with a large global healthcare leader to teach current immunization practices, including identifying insurance coverage for vaccines and developing the means to communicate with pharmacies to better document immunizations given in community pharmacies and avoid duplication of needed vaccines.

Overall, both Dr. Morrison and Yearwood believe they have only scratched the surface of Watson Health’s capabilities.

“I love the functionality of Phytel,” Yearwood says. “I love the different kinds of reports you can pull because you can piece and part it out and do what you need to for the care of the patient. The Phytel support staff has been with us every step of the way, and made it easier to transform our PCPs for the world of value-based care.”

Adds Dr. Morrison, “One of the unforeseen but important concepts is that not every provider is initially engaged or willing to adopt changes. By engaging staff we found successes and quick wins that provided proof to skeptical providers. Phytel has been a big contributor in helping us generate those wins.”

Watson Health Platform distinctions

- Creates methodology for population health management
- Identifies gaps in recommended care across a patient population
- Provides visibility into care gaps for patients who may not be scheduled for visits
- Identifies deficiencies in EMR documentation to help improve processes and deliver more accurate physician quality scorecards
- Creates reports for daily huddles that enable physicians to speak to patients about closing care gaps
- Creates patient summaries that make it easier for physicians and patients to see trends over time
- Enables standing orders to be created in the EMR to streamline workflows while helping ensure patients receive necessary care
- Creates a foundation for participation in value-based care and PCMH recognition

About IBM Watson Health

In April 2015, IBM launched IBM Watson Health and the Watson Health Cloud platform. The new unit will work with doctors, researchers and insurers to help them innovate by surfacing insights from the massive amount of personal health data being created and shared daily. The Watson Health Cloud can mask patient identities and allow for information to be shared and combined with a dynamic and constantly growing aggregated view of clinical, research and social health data.

For more information on IBM Watson Health, visit:

ibm.com/watsonhealth.

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