

# Case Study >>>

## Prime Care Physicians Enhance their Data Conversion with NextPen and Paper

### One partnership leads to another

Albany, N.Y.-based Prime Care Physicians formed in the 1990s as a multi-specialty practice. Starting initially as a large cardiology group, the group soon added primary care colleagues who wanted to remain independent, but still be part of a group. Subsequently, they added a radiology group with an imaging center, and an urgent care center.

For its EHR, the cardiology group used Vertex Medical Records, which had been developed in-house. The primary care practice was an Allscripts' user, but a couple of years ago, Prime Care Physicians made the decision to look for a single EHR solution. The goal was to find something all parts of the organization could use, which meant the solution must work with multiple specialties.

Following its evaluation of multiple EHR and practice management vendors, Prime Care Physicians selected NextGen Healthcare primarily because of the company's expertise in the multi-specialty environment.

Allen Boxbaum, chief administrative officer for the group said, "In addition to NextGen's expertise in numerous specialties, we saw in NextGen Healthcare the chance to have a partnership, not just a relationship with a vendor whom we could walk away from in a few years. We wanted this to be a partnership in which both sides were vested for the long term."

### Overview

#### PRACTICE

Prime Care Physicians, PLLC  
Albany, New York  
www.primecarepc.com

#### PRACTICE PROFILE

Prime Care Physicians, PLLC is a physician-owned, integrated group of cardiologists, primary care physicians, radiologists, and hospitalists. The group practices throughout the Albany, N.Y. capital district and surrounding communities and has 104 providers and 22 locations.

#### BUSINESS PROBLEM

Prime Care Physicians found themselves working on two Ambulatory EHR platforms. The cardiology group used Vertex Medical Records and the primary care group used Allscripts. The group as a whole decided it needed to be on a single platform; but it had to be a system supporting multiple specialties. Another concern was that some data from Vertex (which the group had been using for more than 10 years) wasn't in a format that could be converted into another EHR.

#### SOLUTION

Prime Care Physicians selected NextGen Healthcare in late 2009 and went live on the NextGen® Practice Management system in 2010. In 2011, the group added the NextGen® Ambulatory EHR system with the NextPen™ digital pen solution.

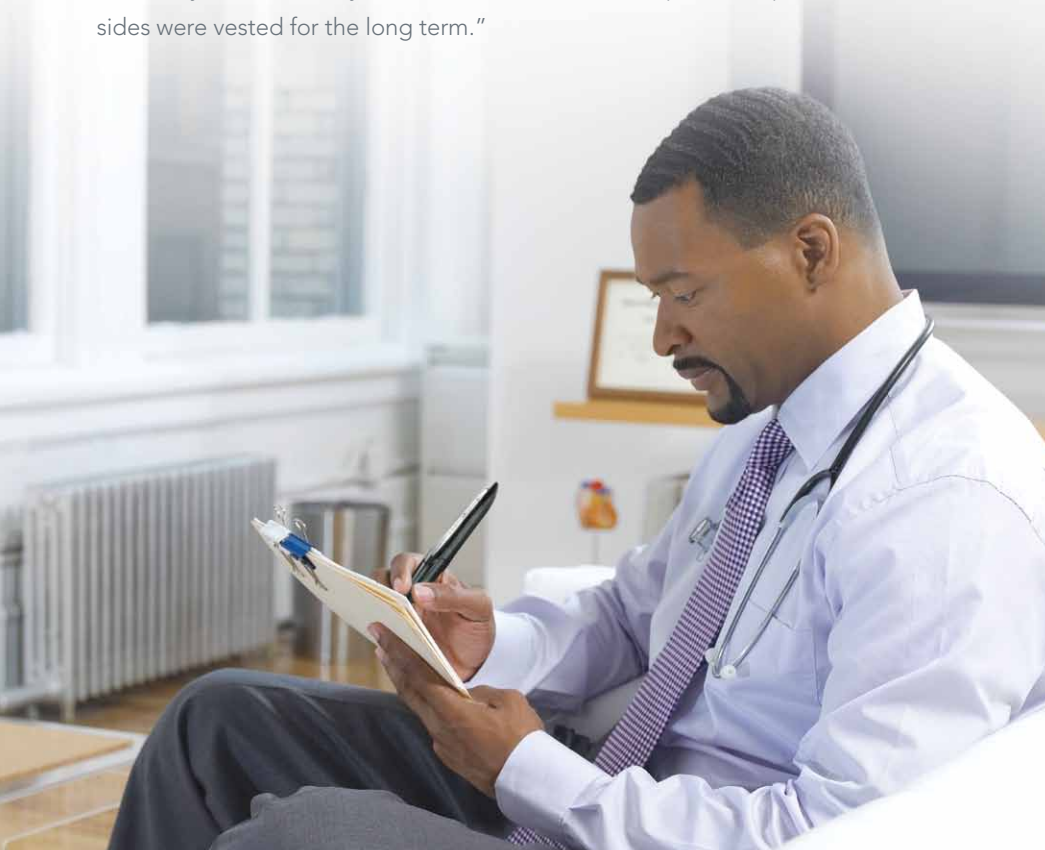
#### PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Turns handwritten forms into discrete data elements
- Recognizes both cursive and block printing
- Unique dot pattern on the forms ensures data goes to the correct patient record
- Maintains image of form making it ideal for storing signatures and drawings

#### CLIENT BENEFITS

- Fits into existing workflow; with minimal learning curve
- Saves time and transcription costs
- No more scanning of forms
- Ensures accuracy, speed, and completeness of data capture

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## Simple solutions to tough problems

When Prime Care Physicians made the decision to move from two EHR platforms to one, they never could have imagined that pen and paper would solve one of the most critical system issues that they faced—that of capturing the family and social history from their cardiology patients. They had found that they couldn't convert data from their legacy system—Vertex Medical Records—because it was not in a structured format. They knew that somehow they would have to recreate the patient's chart with its extensive family and social history by either conducting patient interviews or some other means of abstracting the chart data. This was a huge challenge, because the amount of data they would need to collect was astronomical.

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**“One of the key benefits is that while NextPen changes our workflow, for the patient, nothing is changed. They're still writing on forms using pen and paper. It works 100% of the time – you don't need to change the patient encounter.”**

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In one office alone, they had 18 cardiologists and, on any given day, 10 to 12 of those cardiologists would be handling an average of 18 visits during each half-day session. This meant they had to collect data on between 180 and 216 patients each half-day session that they worked.

The group considered a variety of different solutions, but each, in one way or another, was flawed. For example, Boxbaum said, “We looked at patient kiosks as being a means of capturing the data, but quickly realized that some people just wouldn't want to use the kiosk and we'd have to find another way to accommodate those individuals. So we looked at creating the chart ourselves through interviews.”

He went on to say, “We considered having the patients come in early and having nurses do the interviews, or having someone contact the patient the night before, or having the physicians conduct the interviews at the start of each encounter. Each method however, presented a problem—what if the patient didn't come in early? What if we couldn't reach them by phone the night before? How can you interview up to 400 people a day and keep your operation intact?”

Prime Care Physicians considered having a third party company abstract the chart data, but realized that the cost would be substantial because of the amount of information in each chart.

Prime Care still hadn't found a solution when Boxbaum attended the 2010 NextGen Healthcare Users Group Meeting (UGM) in Orlando Florida. However, when he saw NextPen, he knew in an instant that he had solved the problem. It was so logical that it just made sense.

Boxbaum said, “The beauty of it is that you've given people the interface that they're accustomed to using—pen and paper—something that works 100 percent of the time. You don't even have to change the process for them. Everyone is used to going to the doctor's office and filling out forms. Also, our staff was pleasantly surprised at the handwriting recognition, especially the accuracy of the checkmarks.”

And, when asked what their patients thought of NextPen, he replied, “They don't even know that the pen they're writing with is any different. They just think it's a fat pen connected to a clipboard.”

## The benefits and the surprises were in the workflow processes

“One unexpected benefit,” said Boxbaum, “is that the practice is getting better quality answers to questions asked as part of capturing social and family history, and meaningful use-required questions surrounding demographics and

smoking use. We've seen a real increase in the number of people responding to questions regarding their race, first language, and ethnicity, and regarding their smoking habits. They don't want to respond in front of others, even if they have a private room in which we interview them; but NextPen appears to give them the privacy they want to answer these questions honestly. With race, first language, and ethnicity we have 100 percent compliance, and with smoking, nearly 100 percent. This is excellent since these are part of Meaningful Use indicators."

Other process-related benefits included not having to rekey all of the data entered on the forms. Staff simply docks the pen and an electronic version of the form displays for the staff to validate. Using the electronic version is also much easier than looking at the original form and trying to decipher the patient's handwriting. At the conclusion of the visit, the paper can be shredded or returned to the patient for their records.

### Looking to the future with NextPen

Regarding the process of implementing NextPen, Boxbaum says, "Right now we're new at this and we're still ironing out some of the kinks. We'll need to hone the process some, but we're already looking at our next step, which is to roll out a patient review questionnaire that asks the patient to report a 'self-review of systems'. By having patients complete this form, the physicians will be able to focus on more in-depth discussions of their problems and not on populating the data."

"We've also purchased the NextGen HIE product from NextGen and ideally we want the consent forms done by NextPen to automatically update the consent in the NextGen HIE module, too."

He goes on to say that, NextPen is Bluetooth® capable, a feature the group would like to exploit. "Imagine—the information they've written on their form will be on the

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**"With NextPen, you're buying the start of an idea, not just the technology."**

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screen ready for review before the patient can even hand the form and pen back," said Boxbaum, noting that with Bluetooth, information transfer is immediate and docking the pen is unnecessary.

Listening to Boxbaum discuss the other applications of NextPen at Prime Care Physicians, you can see that for them, the possibilities are nearly endless.



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Patent pending.