THE CHALLENGE

In the fall of 2013, Marietta Memorial Hospital’s (MMH) diagnostic imaging group reached out to their Intalere representative looking for a solution to an expensive problem: a high percentage of ‘no shows’ for imaging appointments. Estimates vary widely depending on the care a patient needs, but even on the conservative side, an appointment value can range from $75 to $150, and much more depending on if there is a more-intensive test or procedure involved.

An Intalere member since 1987, Marietta Memorial Hospital, a 150-bed facility located in Marietta, Ohio, was not unlike many other facilities that struggle with patient communications and engagement. Recognizing that addressing this problem could not only reduce appointment no-shows, but also improve treatment outcomes, encourage preventive care and accelerate payments, they set a high priority on finding a solution. “This was a prevalent issue that was causing missed revenue and administrative headaches as well,” said Mike McGowan, senior director, diagnostic services, MMH.

“MMH diagnostic imaging, in total, had been averaging a 4-7 percent no-show rate across all modalities. We felt this was pretty high and thought that we could improve with an automated patient reminder system.”

THE SOLUTION

Collaborating with Intalere’s telecommunications consultant to discuss possible solutions, Kristen Keglovich, Intalere’s Vice President, Account Management, introduced MMH to Patient Prompt, a cloud-based messaging solution that delivers automated two-way communication between a medical practice and its patients. Patient Prompt was available to Intalere members through its agreement with Carrier Sales. Developed by Prompt Alert, Inc. as an affordable, easy-to-use tool for appointment confirmation, it supports the entire range of patient engagement applications.

Patient Prompt features a patented two-way bridge technology that automatically integrates with a healthcare provider’s EMR scheduler to securely access patient contact information. It then sends customized outbound messages through the patients’ choice of email, SMS text or voice communications. Confirmations and reschedule requests are returned to the EMR system in near real time, enabling prompt response and up-to-the-minute reporting. It requires no on-site hardware, adapts easily to the unique IT environment and business needs of any provider, and virtually eliminates the administrative overhead of patient communications. It is also 100 percent HIPAA compliant and has been proven to deliver appointment confirmations...
at success rates up to 97 percent (versus an industry average of 70-75 percent), with an average of 1.5 attempts per contact (versus an industry average of 5-7 attempts).

“The no-show rate in February 2014 was 9 percent. After implementation, the rate dropped to 4.6 percent in March and 3.5 percent in April. This has meant another 30-40 patients per month.”

Mike McGowan ∙ Senior Director, Diagnostic Services ∙ Marietta Memorial Hospital

After a meeting and product demonstration, MMH decided to take advantage of the vendor’s offer of a free two-week trial for MMH’s mammography program, which had been running at a 7-10 percent no-show rate. Early in 2014, the required systems integration was completed to allow MMH’s on-premise scheduling system to interface directly with Patient Prompt.

THE OUTCOME

The results of the trial – completed in the second quarter of 2014 – were outstanding. The number of missed appointments decreased 50 percent from one year earlier and decreased even more when compared to appointment statistics for early 2014. “The no-show rate in February 2014 was 9 percent,” said McGowan. “After implementation, the rate dropped to 4.6 percent in March and 3.5 percent in April. This has meant another 30-40 patients per month.”

MMH recently signed a contract with Patient Prompt to include all other imaging modalities and their physician offices. “This solution offers an efficient means of delivering outbound messages that elicits positive patient response. Also very important is that it does not entail significant upfront investment, high levels of ongoing expense or productivity-draining manual administration,” said McGowan. “It’s been very beneficial for us and we look forward to continued success as we implement it in other areas of our facility.”