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# Technology for Doctors

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## Commentary

# ABELMed EMR helps Brantford Health Clinic

By ABELMed STAFF



A robust and flexible EMR ensures better patient service and more efficient operations across the board, according to Mark Simone (pictured), president of Ontario Health Clinics, the organization that manages several health clinics across Ontario including the Brantford Health Clinic. The Brantford clinic recently implemented ABELMed Inc.'s ABELMed EHR-EMR/PM software to better manage its 10,000 currently enrolled patients, 122,000 urgent care patient records, and create greater efficiencies throughout the health organization.

“We manage the largest health care clinic in the Brantford area,” says Simone. “As a result, we needed an EMR and practice management system that would work for not only the doctors and other health care practitioners, but also for the administrative staff. Our senior management team looked for a solution that would fit the clinic’s specific needs, was affordable and easy to use. We knew that to run a successful clinic, we had to be organized and efficient, streamlining not only the clinical side but also the business aspects of our busy operation.”

The Brantford Health Clinic is a unique family health group serving Brantford and the surrounding area. The clinic’s 50,000 square-foot state-of-the-art facility in the new Brantford Medical Centre is home to a wide range of services including family practice, urgent care, chronic disease management, mental health, and optometry. All services are supported by a full range of pharmacy, laboratory and diagnostic testing services.

“Our physicians and staff work as a team, using shared resources, to deliver the best medical care possible,” adds Simone. “Because we have a consolidated, central services operation, we have a lot of professionals working behind the scenes, such as our pharmacy and lab technicians, medical clerks and nurses. More than 50 professionals are using ABELMed and most of our co-op students also train on ABELMed during class before coming to us. An EMR like ABELMed is critical to manage all our resources and keep the complex processes well organized.”

For more than a decade, the clinic used a web-based EMR that had limited electronic charting and reporting capabilities, explains Simone. “Plus, we were being charged on a per usage basis on top of a data storage fee structure. Eventually that became a strain on our budget. It was time for a change.”

According to the clinic’s medical director, Dr. Jaswinder Dhillon, it was ABEL’s attention to the principles of healthcare informatics that first attracted him to the product. “Healthcare is changing in Ontario,” says Dhillon. “Our goal is to provide our patients with the best care possible, using existing resources and harnessing clinical efficiencies. We believe that ABEL’s advanced reporting functions and workflow features can help us continue to achieve this goal.”

“We looked at all the EMR products and had serious discussions with two or three other vendors, but the clear choice was ABEL,” adds Simone. “ABELMed afforded us a more cost-effective approach with its flat fee billing structure, its robust features and its customization options such as charting, report generation and document management. ABEL also gave us the opportunity to convert almost all of our data from our older system that depended upon network access and bring it in-house so we could control it ourselves rather than depend on a third-party vendor.”

Simone and his management team also liked that ABELMed is OntarioMD certified and ABEL has accredited software quality management system that is ISO 13485 certified. He stated, “We like knowing that our software has development consistency, quality management control and certification behind it. We are comfortable because we know the software is being developed within the framework and expectations of OntarioMD and other government regulatory bodies, which helps to ensure patient safety and address provider liability.”

Chris Cameron, the Brantford Health Clinic’s manager of operations and administration, says ABELMed worked closely with his team to develop a proprietary automated document-scanning strategy that cut dependency on paper charts and documents in half. “Paper is a huge issue in a clinical setting, so any way to improve document handling is welcomed,” he says. “When we completed our analysis, we recognized areas where we could increase our efficiency in handling medical records and decrease our reliance on paper.”

“Paper is certainly a key issue,” adds Dr. Dhillon. “A physician encounter can routinely generate upwards of 5 to 10 pieces of paper. When you apply that figure to our active patient base, you’re talking about a lot of documents.”

“ABEL helped us to customize our document management capabilities in a pretty dramatic fashion compared to what a standard off-the-shelf solution could do,” he continues. “ABEL also helped with the full data migration from the older EMR by converting 122,200 patient records and porting over more than 790,000 PDF files that were created over a 10-year period. ABEL did a great job living up to their responsibilities by meeting due dates and respecting timelines.”

In terms of learning and using the system, the nurses, technicians and administrators took to the ABELMed system with little effort because of its easy-to-use Windows-based interface, explains Cameron. “There’s a sense of comfort when using a PC. ABELMed’s scheduling and billing modules are exceptional. They use a lot of point-and-click and drag-and-drop features, so it’s very intuitive. The doctors are embracing ABELMed’s charting templates for their unique patient encounters. The software enables them to spend less time on administration and transcription, and more time with their patients, where it really counts.”

ABEL developed a customized training program to accommodate the Brantford Health Clinic’s larger than average team and complex requirements. The clinic took full advantage of ABEL’s in-house training facility and also set up and utilized its own on-site training room for several months ahead of the conversion date. The clinic adopted a ‘train the trainer’ approach in which managers identified key individuals in each department to train as ‘super users’ who could then train other users.

On the IT infrastructure side, the clinic purchased four new servers dedicated to ABELMed: one as an application server, one as a back-up application server, and two more as mirrors to minimize the potential for data loss. “We use cutting-edge technologies and configurations to support our network,” says Cameron.

Arun Rele, chairman and CEO of ABELMed Inc. welcomed Ontario Health Clinics to ABEL’s 3,000+ strong customer group. He is very happy that ABEL is meeting the complex IT requirements of this large multi-specialty clinic. He says, “ABEL specializes in serving the IT needs of health care professionals since 1977 and is an industry leader. State-of-the-art Microsoft .NET technology, quality, ease of use and customer satisfaction are our core strengths and our OntarioMD certified EMR, ABELMed EHR-EMR/PM seamlessly integrates the clinical and business aspects of a medical practice to enable health care professionals to provide better care, faster. As a privately held, self-financed, debt free company, we are not constrained by external lenders or other entities and are dedicated to offering physicians the best value for their investment in our products and services. ABEL is committed to serving the health care IT needs of Ontario physicians for years to come. We look forward to a long and successful relationship with Ontario Health Clinics.”

This ABEL deployment is one of the largest of its kind in the province of Ontario. As president of Ontario Health Clinics, Mark Simone believes it represents the future of how EMR medical platforms could work nationwide. “It gives us the opportunity to showcase a working and effective model for other clinics of our size and capacity,” he says. “This model could help us build a better and more efficient health care system!”

Simone adds, “A good EMR is all about serving patients better and realizing significant gains on the administration side. For us, it’s finding efficiencies in managing documents, booking appointments and coordinating patient services because, every day, we add about 30 new patient records to the system. We have already seen ABEL significantly improve our workflow and we can project where we hope to realize other efficiencies down the road.”

“ABELMed has delivered on our original expectations,” Simone says. “What we are building now is an efficient regional primary-care health clinic. Our goal is to replicate this model in other communities where we can help broaden patient and family access to health care. By offering portability and growth potential, ABELMed affords us the opportunity to enter additional communities. Clearly, ABELMed is part of the solution to bring efficiently managed, comprehensive health care to more people.”

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