

Evaluating benefits is an important component of the connecting South West Ontario (cSWO) Program that helps to support and demonstrate the realization of health system benefits through the adoption of an electronic health record (EHR). By pursuing the measurement of organizational value (improvements in the efficiency of care delivery such as time-savings and redirected resources) and clinical value (patients undergo fewer unnecessary tests, patients have improved access to care), ultimately patients benefit from higher quality, better informed clinical decision-making.

The cSWO Benefits Realization program uses a research-based approach to identify areas of clinical best practice that are affected by the use of the EHR, and works collaboratively with clinicians to understand the value of the EHR. This formative evaluation process informs change management and adoption, and enables clinicians to use the EHR more effectively. This research does not include the use of any personal health information.

This document is one in a series of case studies which describe the clinical value of the EHR in different clinical settings and contexts, particularly with respect to clinical best practices. The work of the cSWO Benefits Realization program is ongoing; depending on the circumstance, these cases occasionally raise questions for further investigation, and clinicians are invited to participate in benefits evaluation to continue to develop these answers.

Value statement

The adoption of OntarioMD's Health Report Manager (HRM) across the south west Ontario (SWO) region is enabling clinical and organizational (including administrative) value for physicians by allowing them to securely receive electronic patient reports from participating hospitals and specialty clinics across Ontario. Pertinent patient information reaches the physician in a timely manner, thus enhancing continuity of care. The information is integrated directly into the physician's certified electronic medical record (EMR) enabling more efficient use of resources and greater focus on enhancing patient experience and quality of care.

A focus towards improved patient experience

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's [*Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*](#) highlights the government's commitment to put patients first by improving their health care experience.¹ Efficient, timely, patient-centered care that is also safe, effective and equitable are the key elements of quality care linked to patient experience.² The challenge of satisfying the different aspects of quality care highlights the need to embrace innovative methods to enhance efficiency so more focus can be placed on providing timely and appropriate care that meets patient needs and ultimately leaves patients with a positive health care experience.

Adopting HRM to improve efficiency and resource allocation

The Urology Associates is a specialist office in Kitchener, operated by three urologists, who currently use HRM. Prior to HRM adoption, the office manager was responsible for scanning faxed reports from the hospitals and ensuring that they are reviewed and uploaded in the patient's EMR, as outlined in Figure 1. HRM has enhanced efficiency at the Urology Associates, as patient reports are sent electronically directly to the EMR, decreasing the amount of time spent scanning, triaging, and uploading faxed reports. The office manager now uses this extra time to enhance patient experience:

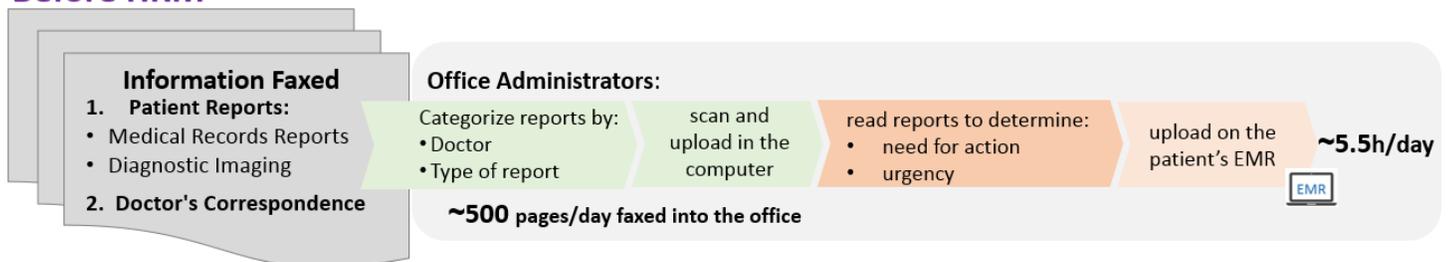
- She **focuses on referrals** coming in to the office and follows up with patients to keep them informed about the next steps of their care.
- She has **implemented and maintains a secure email system to improve patient access** to the office for any questions or concerns that they may have in the process of care. This was found especially beneficial for patients who are awaiting surgeries and require pre-surgery information and paperwork. Through email, the office manager is able to forward the information required, reducing the need for these patients to travel to the office, ensuring that pre-surgery processes are followed and patient care is not compromised.

HRM enhances patient safety and was designed to incorporate Ontario's eSafety guidelines. When an urgent situation arises, staff do not have to sort, upload or triage faxes to find patient information. The information is easily searchable and available in the EMR. This is most crucial for high urgency reports indicating abnormalities such as cancer, where timely interventions may be vital to positive patient outcomes.

Benefits Realized

- **Increased patient safety** as a result of searchable digital information integrated into EMRs rather than a manual scanned and non-searchable image being manually filed into a patient's record.
- **More timely information to support clinical decisions.** Care is no longer dependent on reports being scanned and reviewed. Processes to address abnormal results are enabling immediate care for patients.
- **Improved resource efficiency enabling process improvements.** Urology Associates saved scanning an average of 250 pages/day (shredding, maintenance cost, and fax (printing ink/toner). Time savings of 4hrs/day (**~70 per cent reduction**) enabling managers to invest effort in initiatives that enhance patient experience and quality of care.

Before HRM



After HRM

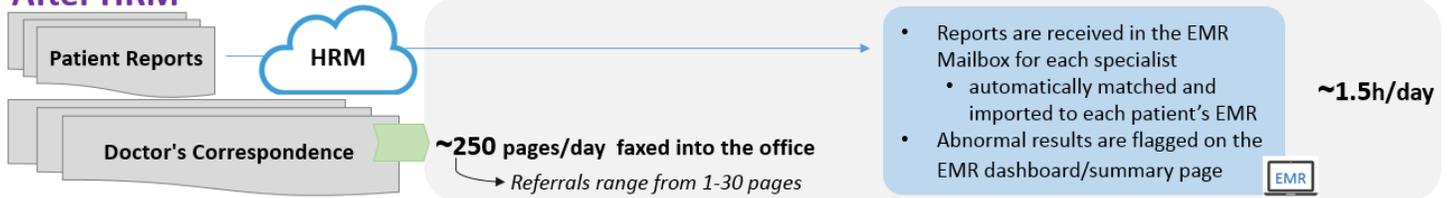


Figure 1 – Before and after HRM adoption, patient reports processes and outcomes for the specialist clinic.

Testimonial

"Since our clinic has adopted HRM, I know I can rely on the automation of test results processing, which has given me more time and energy to focus on developing new practices and technologies that will boost our clinic's quality of care, efficiency and revenue, all of which benefit our patients, staff, and the clinic's reputation as a leader of care in our community..."

Stephanie Crowther, Office Manager at Urology Associates, Kitchener

Questions

For questions, comments, or to participate in cSWO Program's Benefits Realization program, please contact: Lirije Hyseni, Benefits Realization Specialist, cSWO Change Management and Adoption Delivery Partner, eHealth Centre of Excellence: Lirije.hyseni@ehealthce.ca

Sources

1. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2015). Patients first: Action plan for health care. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
2. Health Quality Ontario. (2015). Quality Matters: Realizing Excellent Care for All. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.