



Leveraging technology and continuous improvement to exceed benchmarks

Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates takes full advantage of the flexibility, automation, and efficiency tools in the Centricity™ Practice Solution portfolio to achieve exceptional financial performance.

Summary

The administrator of Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates believes a practice can't succeed by standing still. Replacing its practice management (PM) system with the PM Module of Centricity Practice Solution in 2003 enabled this forward-thinking St. Petersburg, Florida-based organization to cut days in AR over 120 from 35% to 12%. Over the next decade-and-a-half, fueled by a mix of strategy and technology including the addition of the EMR, EDI, and its latest capabilities, the practice achieved remarkable results:

- Received payments 22% faster
- Improved the process for managing claims and remittance safety with EFT deposits
- Initiated a three-year run of zero clinical denials
- Supported seven doctors with the same staff level as when it supported four doctors
- Streamlined workflows with task management

Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates's results underscore the importance of taking full advantage of technology to improve revenue cycle efficiency and strengthen financial performance.



Since its launch in 1989, Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates, LLP has been renowned for its talent and technology. Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates surgical demonstrations have been broadcast live to Europe. The team understands the value of cutting-edge tools that can help children and young adults.

But in October 2003, it was the practice itself that needed help.

The organization was utilizing an outdated practice management system – and it showed. More than 35% of its accounts receivable (A/R) income was 120 days or more outstanding, and the average time it took to receive payment after sending an invoice was 86.3 days. As eye-opening advancements occurred at the operating table, eye-straining headaches stemmed from internal operations.

“Efficient procedures for managing claims, minimizing rejections and streamlining insurance follow-up are particularly important for Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates,” says Debra L. Mitchell, RN, BSN, MBA, who served as practice administrator between 1999 and 2018. As a pediatric sub-specialty practice, 42% of its cases are paid through Medicaid, which has 60% lower reimbursement levels than Medicare in Florida, she says. In addition, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provides healthcare to nearly 9 million¹ children whose families make too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. “So when it comes to commercial insurance, it's very important that we collect efficiently. We need to make sure all authorizations are in place, and that all case data is correct.”

Other practices can relate. As demands in the health care industry continue to change, organizations that operate lean, maximize resources and optimize business performance are well-positioned to compete and win. Doing so requires a flexible, customizable practice management (PM) system, says Mitchell.

“Like many practices, we're not large enough to have different department heads,” she says. “A small staff here in St. Petersburg and in our Tampa office handles HR, A/R, patient complaints and much more. That's why we have to be efficient and zoom in on potential problems quickly.”

In 2003, Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates chose to replace its existing practice management system with what later became known as Centricity Practice Solution's PM Module and adopt Centricity EDI in October 2008. “We needed integrated technology that could grow along with us,” she says.

Centricity Practice Solution's PM module enables practices to accurately enter and confirm patient demographic and insurance billing, while the EDI solution gave office staff the ability to file claims, bill more efficiently and streamline the electronic “schedule to payment” workflow.

Centricity Practice Solution and Centricity EDI provide insight for improving financial performance

By August 2006, only 3.7% of the practice's insurance A/R billings were past 120 days outstanding, compared with 35.0% in August 2001. Also in August 2006, average A/R days fell to 43.7 from 86.3 in August 2001. The practice continued to improve by replacing its previous solution with Centricity EDI. By August of 2010, the practice's days in AR decreased to 35.88. Mitchell continued to drive revenue cycle efficiencies. Today, the practice's outstanding accounts receivable per provider are down to only 38% of the MGMA average for similarly sized orthopaedic surgery practices. Furthermore, only 4.1% of A/R billings are past 120 days outstanding, well below the MGMA average of 16.4%.² These improvements occurred despite having the same billing staff throughout that span, Mitchell reports, praising the value of cleaner claims.

The Right Technology for a Growing Practice

Zero Balance Surprises Doctor

Debra L. Mitchell, RN, BSN, MBA, recalls when a physician at Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates approached her with a superbill in his hand – and a concerned look on his face. “I just performed surgery on this kid two weeks ago,” he told the practice's administrator. “So why is there no balance here?”

Mitchell accessed the patient's record in Centricity Practice Solution and told him the good news that the EDI solutions enabled the practice to already receive payment for the surgery.

“He smiled at me, and brought me another superbill, asking the same question,” Mitchell says. “That one had been paid, too. He couldn't believe everything had already gone through. Our turnaround time for billing is quick.”

Mitchell says 98% of the practice's claims now go out electronically, and most of them are paid within 17 days. “There are several reasons, first utilizing the PM's Case Management solution we can track referrals and authorizations. Then with Centricity EDI Hosted Claims Manager, our claims are scrubbed allowing us to correct incomplete or incorrect claims prior to submission, helping reduce our claim denials, potential underpayments and costly re-work. This helps us send in a ‘clean’ claim the first time, and we get paid faster as a result.”

Online Verification Helps Prevent Errors

At the time of scheduling, personnel at Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates can verify the patient's insurance carrier and other information by sending a HIPAA 270 eligibility request through the Centricity EDI Services component of Centricity Practice Solution.

“After we take insurance info, we just hit the Verification button,” Mitchell says. “If we make a mistake, it gives that person, at that very moment, an opportunity to correct it before the claim is even filed with the payer. We can say, ‘Mrs. Smith, I just tried to verify your insurance but couldn't. Can you please give me your information again?’ The result is much cleaner data. Verifying insurance immediately is one of the biggest advantages of the system – and absolutely critical to running an efficient office here.” The national average for the cost to rework a claim is \$25 dollars³ and if 15%-16% of all claims need rework, that can really add up.³ With Hosted Claims Manager, claims reworks can be reduced by over 50%.⁴

“My Favorite Module”: Hosted Claims Manager Helps the Practice Ensure Accuracy and Speed

Savvy practices realize the importance of having streamlined business processes, not just impressive medical procedures, so they constantly seek ways to gain efficiency, leverage data and surpass administrative standards.

One such improvement came after the practice adopted the Hosted Claims Manager feature of Centricity EDI. Since the implementation of Hosted Claims Manager in 2010, Children’s Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates has had very few clinical denials due to incorrect coding, Mitchell says.

With integrated EDI transactions, Centricity Practice Solution provides a single vendor system that enhances workflow from schedule-to-payment to help reduce the time between the initial visit and the final payment.

Prior to submitting a claim to insurance electronically, Centricity EDI Services enables permitted users to review and edit claims, while also providing near real-time feedback on possible problems with those claims. “After the doctor gives a diagnosis and enters the charges, data is sent to Hosted Claims Manager, and the tool does several scrubs to make sure all the data is clean,” Mitchell says. “For example,

Hosted Claims Manager can tell you before the claim goes out that the modifier isn’t appropriate for the procedure code or doesn’t have the correct laterality or that the diagnosis isn’t considered a primary diagnosis. We don’t have to have a certified coder to process the claim. I can teach anyone in the office to do it because the program helps you.”

To ensure all claims are addressed quickly and thoroughly, any payer claim rejections that haven’t been caught by the system’s proactive editing capabilities are automatically integrated back into Centricity Practice Solution. In the event a claim is rejected, users have the ability to drill down and view the claim in detail to better understand the reason behind the rejection. For example, this feature saved Mitchell’s team numerous hours when new X-ray codes were being entered incorrectly, she says.

Today, staff at Children’s Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates can view a snapshot of any single or batch of claims and see who the destination payer is, when the file was submitted, the status of the file and the status of the individual claims within the file. The system offers the ability to review a complete date- and time-stamped file history, making it easier for Mitchell and others to monitor claims, and eliminating the need to manually track irregularities that have been identified.

“Hosted Claims Manager is a really powerful module - I just love it,” Mitchell says, adding that clinical rejections and denials affect profitability, and take time and effort to address. “We get other kinds of denials from time to time, but we almost never get a clinical one due to incorrect coding. Centricity EDI helps make everything faster and more accurate. Also, we’ve gone from four surgeons to seven surgeons with the same staff level. The only reason we’ve been able to accomplish that is with technology advances.”

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Practice Administrator, 1999-2018

Children’s Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates
St. Petersburg, FL



The Power of Taking Full Advantage of Virence Health's Innovation Stream

Many practice administrators like Mitchell are under the gun and under the microscope. They are charged with managing costs and impressing docs, but their resources are often stretched thin. And what's more, evolution keeps happening, and it is important to take advantage of innovation that help you stay current and be more productive. The more efficient their workflow runs, the better.

For example, Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates takes full advantage of the Centricity Practice Solution's task management capabilities for efficient billing operations. The module enables users to identify and prioritize visits that require some form of follow-up without having to run a report. These visits are identified by inclusion into self-updating queues, each with input criteria such as insurance balance, company, current insurance carrier and more that can be configured to fit the needs of different users at the practice.

Staff can then easily identify and open top priority "visits" (tasks) in their queue and complete follow-up work, such as calling the insurance carrier, changing visit information and re-filing. When staff mark a task as "Complete," it disappears from the list and appears in the Completed Tasks queue. Mitchell and her team use a column sort feature to move larger outstanding payment balances to the top, prioritizing them.

Mitchell adds, "An advantage of task management is the ease of assigning work to the appropriate person based on the practice's unique workflow procedures and criteria. We set up task management to assign claims needing rework based on claim status codes (rejection codes) in the remittance file. As a result, for example, the insurance verifier's queue receives rejected claims related to eligibility while the authorization department queue receives denials for prior authorizations. So instead of waiting until the claim ages, we started reworking and then resubmitting corrected claims based on the code. Taking full advantage of technology is how we've driven our accounts receivable per provider down to only 38% of the industry average."

The Value of a Single-Vendor Solution

While many organizations view tasks such as scheduling, electronic medical records (EMR), billing and claims management as integral, Mitchell and her team also wanted those procedures to be integrated – part of a single system that could help Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates achieve optimal results.

That's why in October 2011, when it came time to select an EMR, the practice chose to adopt the EMR module of Centricity Practice Solution. By integrating EMR and PM functionality, the technology helps enhance quality of care, ensure the efficiency of day-to-day operations and reduce operating costs, Mitchell says.

Mitchell says Centricity Practice Solution enables Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates to access near real-time information needed to make data-driven decisions more efficiently than ever before. Mitchell notes, "Our interface with the hospital streamlined clinical collaboration, enabling us to repurpose 2-3 FTEs into an under-resourced part of the practice instead of hiring new staff. In addition, the flexibility of the system allows us to import and collect the structured data that matters to us, such as data for the Scoliosis Research Society, and then either analyze it for insights or serve it up to providers within their workflow to increase provider efficiency." The results are improved care, better bottom-line results and use of best practices, she says.



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Confidence in the Future

The choices you make in your technology partner matter. You have to have confidence that they will be there for you, and Mitchell's confidence comes from past experience. For example, the ICD-10 transition was seamless for Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates. "In addition to making product changes to simplify the transition, Virence Health initiated a 40-webinar series to help us prepare. The preparation series included project plans and training resources, all at no additional charge. Then, after the transition, while the rest of the industry was struggling, we breezed right through it.

The advanced search and stoplight features made it so easy for physicians to identify the appropriate with highest specificity. We didn't have to buy any other programs or use cheat sheets. And, as a result, we had no decrease in revenue and no increase in denials due to ICD-10 diagnosis codes."

Mitchell adds, "Virence has been a valuable partner for us, and Centricity Practice Solution has enabled our practice to achieve exceptional financial performance."

Quick Tips on Training and Setup

"The trainers at Virence Health really understand what your challenges are," says Debra L. Mitchell, RN, BSN, MBA, administrator for St. Petersburg, Fla.-based Children's Orthopaedic & Scoliosis Surgery Associates from 1999-2018. "In fact, the person who trained us [on Centricity Practice Solution in 2003] is still there. Virence Health's trainers have been in your shoes, and really do understand what your challenges are. There are probably some practices that don't buy enough training time – that's a big mistake."

Also, internal meetings are important before setting up or upgrading Centricity, Mitchell says. "It's such a flexible system, and there are so many different ways it can be set up. It's important to know what you want the system to do for you, and those goals will help you make the right customization choices. When I set up our system, I looked at MGMA and their survey, and I matched my reports to their surveys. That's just one example."

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St. Petersburg, FL



About Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates, LLC

Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates LLC strives to provide outstanding pediatric orthopaedic care to children and young adults along the West Coast of Florida. Care is provided by physicians with outstanding credentials, backed by board certifications and pediatric orthopaedic fellowships. Its physicians provide care using advanced technology, resulting in optimized outcomes. Treatment is focused on the individual patient's needs through specialized care. Each physician brings commitment, compassion, integrity, experience and technical expertise to the practice. The practice's spine surgeons perform more than 120 scoliosis surgeries per year, using specialized computerized navigation technology that increases the precision and accuracy of the surgery. Additionally, each physician at Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates is dedicated to advancing treatment, education and research in the field of pediatric orthopaedic surgery. Each is a clinical or affiliate professor at the University of South Florida's (USF) College of Medicine, and the practice is the primary clinical rotation site for pediatric orthopaedics for USF orthopaedic residents. For more details, visit www.chortho.com.

Virence is a leading software provider that leverages technology and analytics to help healthcare providers across the continuum of care effectively manage their financial, clinical, and human capital workflows. Virence offers a comprehensive suite of innovative technology-enabled solutions that aim to improve quality, increase efficiency, and reduce waste in the healthcare industry.

1 <https://www.medicaid.gov/chip/downloads/fy-2016-childrens-enrollment-report.pdf>, Accessed April 29, 2019.

2 MGMA DataDive, accessed May 3, 2019.

3 Optum, 2015.

4 Representative results realized by Children's Orthopaedic and Scoliosis Surgery Associates, St. Petersburg, FL

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