

Diagnostic Imaging Northwest

Clarity Increases Scheduled Visits by Streamlining and Accelerating Patient Referrals



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Cindy Peterson, Scheduling Manager,
Diagnostic Imaging Northwest

Client Snapshot

Diagnostic Imaging Northwest (DINW) is a collaborative alliance between Medical Imaging Northwest and MultiCare Good Samaritan Hospital, which provides radiology services at five locations throughout Washington's South Sound region. Supported by a team of 25 fellowship-trained radiologists with subspecialty experience, DINW offers a broad range of radiology services, ranging from MRI, CT scans and ultrasound to mammography, bone density scans, fluoroscopy and X-rays. Just as important, the team is totally focused on patient care, quickly responding to referrals and contacting patients within 24 hours to set up appointments.

Diagnostic Imaging Northwest (DINW) offers the best of the best to its patients, from its five convenient locations throughout the South Sound area, to its expert team of subspecialty-trained radiologists. That commitment to patient care starts with scheduling—contacting referred patients within 24 hours, and getting them in for their imaging as quickly as possible.

"As a radiology practice, our turnaround time, on a diagnostic level, has to be quick—it's much different than ordering a consultation with a specialist or surgeon. We are the step these patients need before his or her 'next step,' so it's critical that we get them in as soon as possible," explained Cindy Peterson, scheduling manager for Diagnostic Imaging Northwest.

That need is what brought DINW to Clarity Health in the first place.

"We saw Clarity as a way to move to a more streamlined, electronic referral process, without having to invest in new hardware or go through a lengthy implementation process."

Cindy Peterson, Scheduling Manager, Diagnostic Imaging Northwest

"When I joined DINW, we were a paper-driven, fax-driven company. There were piles of faxed referrals on our two schedulers' desks, and it was taking us between a week to 10 days to contact the referred patients—sometimes longer," Peterson said. "Our staff spent a lot of time tracking down missing or unreadable CPT codes, dealing with incomplete documents, and contacting insurance companies to verify coverage. The whole process was already setting us behind—and, that was back when the pre-authorization requirements weren't as strict as they are today. We needed a way to work more efficiently."

So, Peterson set out to find a viable solution, and discovered Clarity's web-based Referral Management solution. Not only would the solution streamline the referral process and eliminate the paper, but Clarity's service team would handle the insurance authorizations on DINW's behalf.

"We saw Clarity as a way to move to a more streamlined, electronic referral process, without having to invest in new hardware or go through a lengthy implementation process," Peterson said. "And the fact that Clarity's service team would handle insurance authorizations for us was huge."

DINW began using Clarity in fall of 2009, and the benefits quickly followed.

Eligibility and Authorization In Hours

"Before Clarity, our schedulers logged a lot of phone time, just to secure the appropriate insurance verifications. That always involves a lot of time on hold, which is never good for productivity," Peterson said. "Now, instead of spending time on securing pre-authorizations, they simply enter the referrals in Clarity. Within about four hours, our schedulers get an automatic, readable diagnosis and eligibility confirmation electronically. The turnaround time is so quick that we can now make the first contact with the referred patient within 24 hours of getting the order."

If something changes with the referral, or the staff needs an insurance double-check, they just send a quick message to the Clarity service team.

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"If a referring doctor submits an order in late March, but we don't see the patient until April, we'll send Clarity a note to recheck eligibility, in case the referral expired or the patient's insurance

is month-to-month," Peterson said. "It's a 30-second process, instead of spending 20-30 minutes on the phone."

In addition to improving turnaround time, Clarity also enabled DINW to increase referral volume without adding staff.

"When we started with Clarity, we had three locations; now we have five, and insurance requirements have become more stringent," Peterson said. "Without Clarity, we would have to double our existing scheduling staff. Even then, it might not be possible to keep up with the demand if we were still using our paper-based processes."

HL7 Integration Streamlines the Process

Clarity's Referral Management gives DINW a single view of all of its referral information, for easier tracking and follow-up. But, Peterson wanted to take these efficiency gains to the next level.

"We were the first company to use HL7 to integrate Clarity with our internal system," Peterson said. "That gave us the capability to have everything, electronically, in one place."

Initially, the interface was set up for inbound orders only.

"With the integration, referral information flows from Clarity into our own system, so we can go online and quickly grab whatever we need in a single step," Peterson said. "It worked so well, that we set up a two-way interface in HL7.

Clarity Health Solutions

- Referral Management
- Insurance Processing
- HL7 Integration

Benefits

- Reduced patient contact time from 7 to 10 days to just 24 hours
- Increased the success rate of referrals and tracked insights with Clarity Reporting
- Decreased time internal staff spends on insurance verification from 20 minutes per patient to 30 seconds per patient
- Added two locations without increasing scheduling staff
- Streamlined interaction with referring physicians through automatic chart notes downloads and providing online report access

Clarity Product Snapshot

Clarity Referral Management is a web-based solution that provides one place for radiology practices to track and manage referrals electronically. Instead of verifying insurance coverage yourself, the Clarity service team handles it all for you, confirming eligibility and returning all the necessary authorizations in a matter of hours. Unlike many other solutions, Clarity's vendor agnostic platform can integrate with most EMR systems, which means you can pull the patient charts and other supporting data needed to set up imaging quickly and accurately; ultimately improving the quality of care.

Now, scheduling status and return reports flow back into Clarity, so referring physicians can retrieve these electronically, instead of receiving these by fax. “

According to Peterson, the integration is having such a positive impact that DINW is considering turning off the fax option in the future.

“The less paper we have and the more efficient we make the process, the better the quality of patient care we can provide,” Peterson said.

A Company That Values Customer Input

When Cindy Peterson first discovered Clarity, it was a relatively new product. Over the years, she’s worked with the product development team, suggesting new features and enhancements.

“The healthcare industry is changing so quickly, from the payer requirements to patient expectations. As the ones who work in the trenches, we can provide a clear picture of our challenges, and the kinds of enhancements that would solve those challenges,” Peterson said. “The people at Clarity really listen to their customers, and

respond—not just with talk, but with the new features we need.”

One good example is the enhancement that enables schedulers to automatically download chart notes.

“In radiology, we can’t do our job without a patient’s medical history. We need access to prior studies and other pertinent information that’s only available through the chart notes,” Peterson said.

Before download, schedulers grabbed all the new orders, and printed the notes to PDF files in the patient account.

“Now, with HL7, these orders flow directly into the patient record with no human intervention,” Peterson said. “This saves several minutes on each patient, which may not sound like a lot. But, when you multiply that by about 100 orders per day, the time savings really adds up.”

A User Friendly Solution that Works for Radiology’s Unique Needs

Since starting with Clarity, DINW has seen its share of benefits, from lower administrative costs to increased efficiency to improved turnaround time. Its referral success rates are higher, and its

write-offs are now well below the national average. And, DINW is accomplishing all of this while making life a little bit easier for their schedulers.

“As schedulers, we see a lot of benefits to using Clarity. It’s easy to navigate and puts all the information we need to schedule our patients right at our fingertips,” said Nicole Cromer, scheduling assistant at Diagnostic Imaging Northwest. “Everything is readable and well organized. If there is an issue, we just send Clarity a comment or call them pick up the phone and it’s quickly resolved.”

After five years of working with and giving feedback to Clarity, Peterson has changed from a customer to a Clarity advocate.

“From day one, the benefits of Clarity have dramatically outweighed the costs—and the solution keeps getting better,” Peterson said. “It’s an excellent solution by a smart, responsive company who understands healthcare. It’s definitely made a difference for us.”

About Clarity

Clarity Health is a leading provider of care-coordination solutions for the healthcare industry. Clarity helps healthcare providers more effectively manage care transitions, improving their business performance and the quality of patient care. Clarity’s exclusive approach enables healthcare providers to immediately realize the benefits of care coordination without prolonged and expensive investment in proprietary technology solutions. More information can be found at clarityhealth.com.