Sarasota Arthritis Center
Customer Case Study

Founded by Rondal Weitzner, MD, Sarasota Arthritis Center has been a rheumatology mainstay in the Sarasota, FL market for 45 years. It is the second largest rheumatology practice in the state of Florida and helps set the bar for the highest levels of quality in the state. With 3 current locations in Sarasota, Bradenton, and Venice, Sarasota Arthritis Center (Sarasota) remains privately owned and is staffed by 11 physicians and one mid-level provider. The practice values bringing humanity to the business of caring. While financial outcomes are essential to keeping the doors open, the team is deeply focused on their patients' outcomes. In addition to Sarasota's commitment to clinical excellence, they also endeavor to be a destination workplace where people want to work – and stay.

The pandemic proved to be a huge catalyst for change. The fear of catching a virus from which thousands were dying was very real. Staff wanted to remain home, and the practice quickly decided to give their staff members the tools to continue working from home, mitigating the risk of exposure. According to Stacy Yonker, CEO of Sarasota, "With data and dashboards, you can tell when people are working – or not. Data created a culture of accountability, and it helped us run our business." Even after the pandemic concluded, Sarasota continued to offer work from home flexibility and many positions became hybrid roles permanently in support of their goal to be a destination workplace.

At that time, Sarasota also decided to transition permanently to a four-day work week. To support this change, they needed clarity on which providers were operating at full schedule and could not see new patients. Conversely, they needed to know which providers have capacity to add more patients, while also planning for the providers who will soon be transitioning to retirement. The practice also introduced the use of mid-levels to manage follow-up care and fully extend the capacity of their doctors.

Business Needs

Like many other rheumatology practices, infusions, billing, and some other capabilities were outsourced to a number of vendor partners. These partners took a percent of the profits as renumeration for their services. The lack of regular communication and proof that service levels resulted in increased costs, poor oversight and a number of other inefficiencies. There were also ongoing challenges with identifying, communicating, and

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resolving deficiencies with companies that were managing billing and infusion services. CEO, Stacy Yonker reports, "I would look at accounts receivable and by doing a quick estimate in my head, the current level seemed to be too low. The results from an audit two weeks ago should have been resolved by now. Without data, it was unclear where there were opportunities and what to do to resolve them."

While Sarasota's existing practice management system did have some existing dashboard capabilities in the base product, they were laborious to use. It usually took 6 – 8 hours on average to run reports, cull through data, create graphs and build the monthly board report. Timeliness of data was also important. Sarasota was working with data from the previous month. It was all they had to run their practice; this delay did not support their needs. There had to be a better way and Sarasota began looking for a platform to provide all the necessary information to effectively run their business.

Keeping More Profit

Because healthcare margins are so slim, giving away a few percent to every vendor was impacting margins. Sarasota had a business goal of keeping more for themselves. To do this, Sarasota wanted to bring infusions and their billing back in-house and eliminate the need for managed services. However, the information needed to do this was locked up in static reports housed in their current practice management system. Further, there was no tracking or management capabilities and no scalability to meet expanding informational needs. Sarasota needed an analytics platform that would support their goal of returning various service lines back inside their walls. The leadership decided it was time to figure this and keep the profits.

After a quick Google search and reading information from several vendor websites, Yonker decided to pursue MGMA's DataDiscovery platform, powered by WhiteSpace Health. While it was important to obtain high quality dashboards that allowed immediate visibility to Sarasota's KPIs, the CEO soon learned that tremendous value could be gained by using the platform to understand the factors that influenced these results.

RevIntel
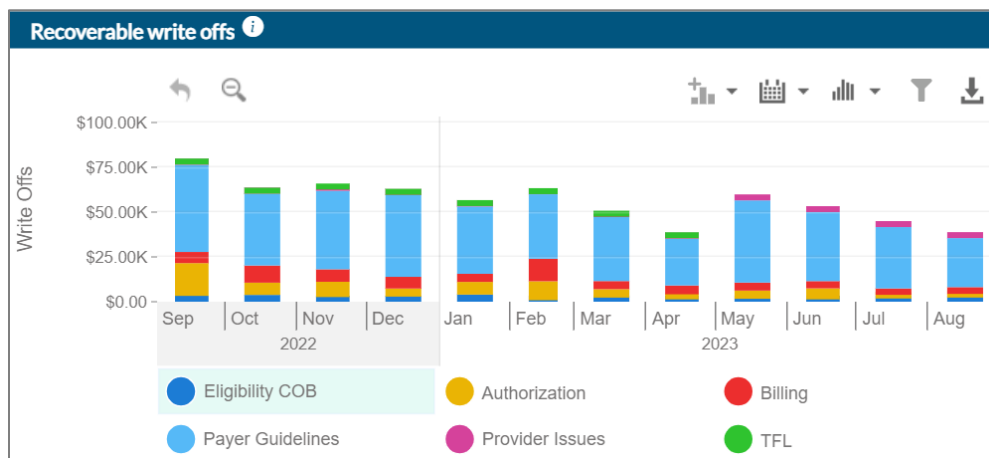
The machine learning capabilities (ML) in the platform, known as RevIntel, were a huge differentiator. By applying sophisticated ML to customer data, RevIntel finds areas of

opportunity and translates this information into human readable steps that guide staff to successfully resolve issues. These capabilities were far superior to competing products in market, taking the concept of dashboards to an entirely new level. Even with all this value, Stacy knew that her board wanted a return on their investment - and she was able to do just that.

Return on Investment

- The platform had more capabilities than the competitors' products – and for a better price. Sarasota was also able to save $500,000 in payroll costs that were required to operate a competitor's platform.

- At go-live, Sarasota found an entire week's worth of claims that were not billed by their vendor. This information allowed Sarasota to effectively communicate with the vendor who was managing infusion and billing services.

- A short while later, another batch of 1,100 unbilled claims were discovered by the platform that had experienced extreme delays. That is money Sarasota was not likely to have found with the most basic tools offered by our practice management system. The platform helped isolate the root cause of the unbilled claims, and the evidence was taken back to their outsourced vendor to stop it from reoccurring.

- Data also revealed how well doctors, mid-levels and revenue cycle staff were performing. It created transparency and is not used to hold team accountable for achieving productivity goals. The platform is also used in determine wages and how many employees will be needed to support growth.

- Quarterly reporting dropped from 8+ hours a month to less than an hour, effectively giving the CEO an extra work day each month.

- By having data at the ready, Sarasota was able to bring infusion and billing services in-house and eliminate MSOs. Through these efforts they have increased our profit margin for each of these items by 3 – 5%.

Plans for Growth

"Since we launched the platform, our practice has grown from 48 to 65 FTEs, excluding providers, and we have recaptured profits that were previously going to our vendors," reports Stacy Yonker, CEO of Sarasota Arthritis Center. "We are now able to provide infusions for other practices in our market and we are already recruiting for another doctor and one to two mid-levels to support this new volume. Additionally, we are looking to covert our CFO to permanent full-time status this year. The ability to track performance, provide feedback and adjust our business is key to supporting future growth."

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