



case study

Avera Lab Network Remains in Control While Integrating Multiple EMRs



With today's demand for interoperability and data sharing, the Avera Laboratory Network with outreach laboratories at Avera McKennan, Avera Queen of Peace, Avera Sacred Heart and Avera St. Luke's were faced with a challenge: How to integrate multiple Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems from physician customers, while remaining in control of the order process by capturing clean orders and accurate billing? With the help of ARUP Laboratories and its partnership with Atlas Medical, to date two Avera Network Laboratories have been able to implement new outreach management technology, MD Bridge™, and face their challenges head-on.

Challenge

Integrate EMR systems from multiple physician sites without losing control of the order process or personalized service.

In conjunction with the mission of Avera Health, the Avera Laboratory Network's purpose is to provide quality, cost effective health ministry. Avera Laboratory Network (ALN) comprises four strategically located testing centers throughout South Dakota. The four testing centers are Avera McKennan, Avera Queen of Peace, Avera Sacred Heart and Avera St. Luke's.

Solution

Implement MD Bridge outreach management solution to provide clean and accurate orders, reduce medical errors and improve communication with physician customers.

As a full service, hospital-based reference laboratory, the network combines superior quality services, extensive experience, and state of the art technologies to bring the community all the economies of the large commercial laboratories, with local personalized service usually found in smaller laboratory environments. ALN believes that success in business today relies on its ability to be flexible, respond to industry and technology changes, and to provide personalized quality service. As a result of the network's commitment to quality, in 2009 Avera McKennan was one of the first laboratories in the United States to achieve ISO 15189 accreditation.

When first considering an Outreach Management solution, Mel Heinz, MT (ASCP) SC, Avera Lab Network's Business Development and Connectivity Specialist, knew Atlas Medical was the "Cadillac company for connectivity" and was considering the Atlas Order Entry and Results Review solution. Similar to many laboratories, he was faced with capital budget challenges. ARUP, with a philosophy that healthcare is best provided at the community level, offered ALN with an outreach solution to complement their strategic expansion plans, including the MD Bridge Order Entry and Result Review product solution. ARUP Laboratories has partnered with Atlas Medical to provide MD Bridge, an advanced web-based solution for the physician-outreach business.



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ARUP MD Bridge ensures a secure interface with physicians, facilitating:

- Reduced turnaround times
- Decreased order-entry errors
- Enhanced EMR connectivity
- Enabled advanced beneficiary notices (ABNs) checking and printing
- Improved laboratory-reporting capabilities
- Increased revenue
- Improved productivity
- Enhanced client communications

Improved client community relations and awareness

“One of the biggest pay-offs for our nursing and laboratory staff was the omission of the manual requisition,” says Mel Heinz. “By placing orders on-line through MD Bridge, there is less duplicate entry, which means more efficiency and less entry errors.” One key feature found in the MD Bridge Order Entry module is medical necessity checking with advanced beneficiary notice (ABN) generation. “Callbacks for information have reduced dramatically for those clients using medical necessity validation,” stated Heinz. He added, “Cleaner orders and cleaner billing are both huge factors. And, when the hospital receives the specimen, the patient information is already in the system. That puts our labs in the same playing field as the national reference labs.”

In addition to the benefits gained with on-line order entry, ALN and its clients also benefit with on-line results. According to Mel Heinz, “There is one place to go for results. The results are always there. This in turn allows our staff to provide better service to the physicians and other healthcare providers.” Not only is the ALN staff pleased with the solution, the physician customers rate the MB Bridge product “near the top, if not the top, compared to other products on the market”, according to Heinz.

Integration with multiple EMRs was another challenge ALN faced. With MD Bridge EMR integration, the network can integrate with the hospital’s EMR as well as client-specific EMRs. Mr. Heinz explains, “All of the outreach laboratory’s work is sent to the hospital EMR, providing a more complete patient record within the hospital.” According to Mel Heinz, “This is another huge advantage for ALN when competing with the national laboratories that don’t provide the same integration.”

In addition to the benefits gained using the application, the integration of the MD Bridge application was seamless. Heinz closed with, “Once installed, you don’t have to go back and fix it. It’s up, running and dependable.”

Moving forward, ALN is in the process of bringing its remaining two laboratories, Avera St. Luke’s and Avera Sacred Heart, on-line with the MD Bridge product, and it has numerous EMR interface integrations planned with physician customers. The activities demonstrate ALN’s future plans surrounding meaningful use adoption and the HITECH Act.

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