

CASE STUDY

ARIA 

RCM Services

CGM APRIMA

EHR and Practice Management



Synchronizing Healthcare

The providers and chronic care nurses at **Chipola Medical Associates** have created a special home for their patients. This is due to the amazing care provided by Dr. Joe Gay, Office Manager Dusty Griffin, RN, and the other nurses and specialists on staff. Helping enable that focus on patient care are the efficiencies and benefits afforded by key software and services such as **CGM APRIMA** and **ARIA RCM Services**.



CompuGroup
Medical

“You want someone who you can trust and who uses this information to help you make even smarter business decisions.”

ROSIE GAY

OPERATIONS
CHIPOLA MEDICAL ASSOCIATES

PICTURED:
DR. JOE GAY



Prioritizing patient care with CGM APRIMA and ARIA RCM

- Streamlining care with an integrated practice management and EHR solution
- Offering proactive reminders and preventive care
- Maintaining constant communication with chronic care patients
- Prioritizing clinicians and patient care over administrative staffing
- Beating industry benchmarks for denied claims

“With the right resources, we get to focus on patient care. We have peace of mind that we have the best in the business helping us manage our patients, providing outstanding care at the right time and at the right place. We just get to enjoy being with our patients,” said Rosie Gay, Operations, Chipola Medical Associates.

Adopting the best EHR solution

At Chipola Medical Associates, Dr. Gay and a growing team of nurse practitioners have served patients in Marianna, Florida, and the surrounding counties since 1990. As their practice has grown, Chipola Medical Associates has made changes to the software they use and the partners they rely on, always in an effort to free up resources for patient care.

Eleven years ago, Chipola Medical Associates decided to go digital and adopt its first electronic health record.

The team looked at different options, but with its

adaptive learning and intelligent navigation, CGM APRIMA EHR and Practice Management proved to be the right fit.

“The timeline and the implementation went very smoothly, and it was a major implementation for us,” Rosie said. “Going from paper to digital is no small feat at all.”

“At the time, it’s not like we shut down the practice to do that implementation. We were seeing our patients, and at the same time, we were getting all of our paper files into the digital format,” she said.

It went well, and that was Chipola Medical Associates’ first experience with the team behind CGM APRIMA.

CGM APRIMA offers a fully integrated electronic health record and practice management solution. This integration was one of the reasons Chipola Medical Associates adopted CGM APRIMA, and it is a key benefit to this day.

“You can’t work efficiently if you have disparate systems,” Rosie said. “That integration really just stood out head and shoulders above all the competitors at that time, and I think it still does. We made that commitment 11 years ago, and our commitment is still unwavering.”

Delivering superior care for patients with chronic illnesses

Rural areas are chronically underserved for primary care, but Chipola Medical Associates leverages the functionality and efficiency afforded by CGM APRIMA to offer more services and treat more patients.

At Chipola Medical Associates, the registered nurses and Dr. Gay put a lot of focus on chronic care. The nurses

CHIPOLA MEDICAL ASSOCIATES, LLC

RURAL PRIMARY CARE PRACTICE

MARIANNA, FLORIDA

30+ YEARS SERVING PATIENTS

MULTIPLE PROVIDERS INCLUDING SEVERAL NURSE PRACTITIONERS

INTERNAL MEDICINE, CHRONIC CARE

develop relationships with their patients, and this helps with everything from setting up patients’ pill boxes to scheduling follow-up appointments and continuing the medical conversation between visits.

“The CGM APRIMA software does have a chronic care module that we use very actively, because there are certain rules and guidelines that Medicare sets out about how much time must be spent with a patient,” Rosie said. “It all must be documented. The care plans must be on the computer to care for those patients.”

CGM APRIMA offers clinical decision support with automated tasking to prompt specific users to reach out to patients proactively for



preventive care. Features for patient marketing help providers send targeted outbound emails to engage patients and set criteria for outbound campaigns based on last appointment date, provider, diagnosis, services performed, or services ordered.

“This is just another way that we’re using the software, but it really allows us not only to keep in constant contact with our patients, but also to make sure that if a patient calls us up and needs a sick visit, we will accommodate them.”

Focusing on patient care with help from ARIA RCM Services

Chipola Medical Associates has grown quite a bit over the 11 years that it has been using CGM APRIMA. When the clerical demands of billing for an increasing number of patients became a problem, Rosie championed the idea of partnering with an outside agency. This time, ARIA Health Services proved to be the best choice.

ARIA Health Services helps practices with revenue cycle management; credentialing, CVO, and professional licensing; provider enrollment; and more. Chipola Medical Associates partnered with ARIA RCM Services to help them overcome a difficult administrative challenge.

Said Rosie, “We were in a situation where, as the practice was growing, it just became more difficult to afford enough staff to stay up with all the claims processing and all the superbill management.”

“I remember the time when we would literally call all of our patients for reminders as part of the staff. We would send out our own printed statements. I would lick the stamps on the envelopes, and mail those out,” she said. “That is a very human-resource-intensive piece of the practice,

and pretty soon that can outpace the demand for staff that you need for your clinical side.”

It became obvious to Dr. Gay and the team at Chipola Medical Associates that an outsourced billing service would restore the practice’s operational efficiencies and free the staff to return its focus where it belongs: on its patients.

Beating industry standards for denied claims rate

The experts at ARIA RCM Services are dedicated to maximizing a practice’s reimbursements and managing its denial rate.

“When we looked at our denial rate,” Rosie said, “we could kind of see that we probably were not getting all our claims paid as they should be, per our contracts with our payers.”

For Rosie, a rising denial rate presented two problems.

“If you don’t manage that claims denial, then



basically you're just working for free," she said, "and you're depriving your patient of having that information in their medical record, which is basically derived from the superbill sent to the health insurer."

ARIA RCM Services aggressively goes after denied claims, and for Chipola Medical Associates, the results have been excellent, far exceeding an industry target of 11%.

In the last quarter of 2021, Chipola Medical Associates saw a denied claims rate of 4% in October, 5% in November, and 3.59% in December.

"It does fluctuate, but when you are—on your worst month—half of what the industry benchmark is, you're doing really, really well," Rosie said. "And that means everybody's happy. Your patients are happy. The payers are happy. The regulators are happy. And, of course, the practice is happy, because we don't have to go back and do a lot of re-work."

Receiving personalized account management and RCM insight

Rosie can speak to the practice's RCM success compared to industry standards thanks in part to the close communication from Neicey, her dedicated account executive for ARIA Health Services.

The relationship between Neicey and Chipola Medical Associates goes deeper than just the billing service.

"We have end-of-the-month teleconferences with her," Rosie said. "Neicey so very professionally distills all of our financial transactions: claims process, claim denial rate, receipts. We have her tease out our chronic care management volumes. She teases out our volumes and denials by provider."

- *PROFESSIONAL IMPLEMENTATION THAT DID NOT SHUT DOWN THE PRACTICE*
- *FULLY INTEGRATED SYSTEM FOR CARE MANAGEMENT, QUALITY GUIDANCE, AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT*
- *AUTOMATED TASKS AND CLINICAL DECISION SUPPORT ASSIST WITH PREVENTIVE AND CHRONIC CARE SERVICES*
- *PERSONAL ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT TO REVIEW END-OF-MONTH RESULTS COMPARED TO INDUSTRY STANDARDS*

Neicey measures Chipola Medical Associates' performance against industry standard benchmarks. This way, the results delivered by ARIA RCM Services do not exist in a vacuum. They can be measured, rated, and compared against what similar practices would normally experience.

"She is beyond committed," Rosie said. "I'm sure she has other customers than us, but it is just a very special relationship."

Through its team of account executives, ARIA Health Services stays connected with practices, providing personalized attention and insight.

"You want someone who you can trust and who uses this information to help you make



even smarter business decisions,” Rosie said. “I cannot underscore enough how important Neicey is to our practice. She’s wonderful.”

Caring for patients in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael

In the fall of 2018, Hurricane Michael became the first Category 5 storm in more than 25 years to make landfall in the contiguous United States. The storm tore across the Florida panhandle, its devastation reaching as far as 80 miles inland where it peeled back the roof of a building that was home to the largest private internal medicine practice in the region, Chipola Medical Associates, LLC.

“We were on the second floor, and it displaced us,” said Rosie.



The practice relocated to the only commercial space available: a single-floor building that was once home to a sewing factory for the Russell athletic wear company.

“We had no power and no computers, only a clipboard and a piece of paper, but we were able to continue seeing

our patients,” Rosie said. “People still do have healthcare needs during a natural disaster.”

Chipola Medical Associates’ perseverance and dedication to their patients and community was never more evident than it was during that crisis in October 2018, but it was not out-of-character for a practice that has prioritized the health of its patients for more than 30 years.

For Chipola Medical Associates, the greatest benefit of employing solutions such as CGM APRIMA and ARIA RCM Services is freeing up their staff and specialists to spend more time helping patients. Just like they did during the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, the staff at Chipola Medical Associates continues to keep their patients’ health and wellbeing as their top priority.

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