



Lifestyle Eye Center

Building a Practice with Help from Kareo

Ophthalmology

The Lifestyle Eye Center, based in Walla Walla, Wash., is a single-physician ophthalmology practice that specializes in cataract, cornea, and refractive surgery. The practice opened in 2010 with one physician, a single office and billing person, and one medical assistant.

Challenge

The first front office and billing person who was hired when Lifestyle Eye opened didn't have much billing experience and soon left. After that, the practice encountered the same problem again—too much specialized work for a single person.

"The practice had Kareo, and it was so easy to use that even the inexperienced person was able to figure it out and do some things," explains Estee Pummel, the current billing and insurance manager. "But there was just too much complex billing along with scheduling, checking patients in, and answering phones for one person to do alone. They were barely getting any claims out the door."

Solutions

The decision was made to hire a new office manager who made some staffing recommendations, including hiring a dedicated billing person. Estee was hired to fill the position. "Even though Kareo was easy to use, the billing situation was not in great shape," she recalls. "When I started, I ran a report for that quarter, and they had only collected a very small amount. There were a lot of unbilled claims."

Using Kareo to run reports, process a lot of claims, and get a handle on all the billing quickly, Estee was able to collect over \$25,000 in her first full month. "I have been in medical billing for over 12 years, and I have seen a lot of different billing systems," she says. "I couldn't believe what a good deal Kareo was, how much time it saved, and how easy it was to use."

Results

Since Estee joined Lifestyle Eye in 2011, the billing has improved tremendously and the practice has been able to grow quite a bit. There are now five office and billing staff and three medical assistants with plans to hire another medical assistant soon.

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"New staff get up to speed very quickly. I am training a person to work in Kareo and

KAREO SOLUTION



Kareo Billing



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do eligibility and authorizations, and she learned how to do her job in a couple of days.”

In fact, Estee says that she was up and running without any training. “I didn’t even have to look up instructions,” she adds. As she progressed and needed deeper features she used the online tutorials, but she believes that it is so intuitive that a person with billing experience can pick it up easily. “At first the ease of use made me nervous because past systems I had used required double and triple checking for mistakes or there would be tons of mistakes on your claims,” she recalls. “But over time, I have learned to trust Kareo completely.”

Estee has gone from an old system of triple checking to submitting claims with the push of button—no checking involved. “I submit claims daily,” she explains. “After I get the encounters and the claims are completed, it really is just a push of a button at the end of the day.” The practice’s average days in A/R varies because it is a surgery practice, but it is usually 40-45. Medicare and Blue Cross are both about 14 days, and there are almost no denials. According to Estee, “If we do get a denial it is generally because of something that I missed, and it is easy to fix and resubmit.”

The claims are so clean and paid quickly because there are so many places where information is reviewed and scrubbed. In addition, Estee knows that they are also doing much better with patient due amounts. “Using eligibility checking and authorizations identifies a lot of people who would have fallen through cracks before,” she says. “We can make sure services are covered or make payment arrangements. Then, afterwards we use Kareo patient statements, which have a much better rate of return than our old statements.”

Just to be sure using the patient statement service made sense, Estee did a cost analysis. “It cost about \$2 per patient statement for me to do it manually and we weren’t getting as many payments,” she says. “The cost with Kareo is less than half that and we’ve seen an increase in payments and shorter turnaround time.”

Overall, as the practice continues to make improvements in its processes and use Kareo for more things, they are finding the A/R dropping and collections increasing. Since that first successful month, not only have they more than doubled their staff, they have more than tripled collections.



14 days
Medicare/BC pymts.



3x
collections



<1%
denials/rejections



65%
cut patient stmt. cost

Conclusion

Lifestyle Eye Center is continuing to grow and expand because of streamlined billing operations and steady cash flow thanks to Estee and Kareo. Estee attributes this to the ease of using Kareo, “There are so many things I love about Kareo that I could go on and on, but it isn’t just me. Our front desk is now using Kareo too, and the other day as I showed one of them how it easy it was to track authorizations, she said to me, ‘I’m beginning to love Kareo as much as you do!’”