Speech Path

Kareo Helps Practice Streamline & Restructure

Physical Therapy

The Speech Path first opened its doors in 2005 in Perry, GA offering pediatric speech therapy. Two years later, the practice expanded, adding another office in Macon. In 2009, they grew again, adding pediatric physical therapy followed a year later by pediatric occupational therapy.

Kate Lewis joined the business in February of 2011 as the Administrator of Therapy Services. In 2012, one of the owners sold her share of the business to Kate, making her co-owner with Kay Hancock, M.Ed., CCC-SLP. For some time, Kate had been aware that there were issues with the practice's scheduling and billing, but now as a co-owner she was in a position to help make changes.

Challenge

The Speech Path was using several different solutions—both electronic and manual—to manage scheduling, patient information, claims, and patient statements. "We were heavily overstaffed to keep up with all the manual tasks," explains Kate. "And as a result we had a lot of human resources issues in addition to a lot of inefficiency."

For scheduling they were using Google calendar. "For claims processing—and that is a generous term— we were using a home-grown solution that was built for the company," Kate recalls. "It was a solution that was designed more for the abilities of the users than to effectively process claims. We could create a claim or statement to mail but you couldn't track A/R or report on any of the data." So, there was no way to track how long it took to get paid or to easily track or resolve problems.

If someone was on vacation or called in sick, it caused delays in billing. Because the therapists completed the superbills by hand and then they were processed in a variety of ways either mailed or submitted on a web portal, claims processing was very inconsistent. "We couldn't depend on steady revenue," says Kate. "It varied so widely from week to week."

As if that wasn't enough, they knew that they were getting a lot of rejections and denials that had to be reprocessed. Many of these were due to problems that could be easily resolved, but they didn't know that then because it was hard to track the data.

Solutions

In early 2012, the co-owners of The Speech Path were ready for a change. They opted for a combination of WebPT and Kareo to manage their scheduling, billing, and patient charts. After only 10 months, it radically changed their practice.

KAREO SOLUTION

Kareo Billing

WebPT

The Speech Path

"The combination of WebPT and Kareo allowed us to restructure our back office needs and cut four full time positions. At the same time, we added three new providers!"

🌿 Results

The support staff is now comprised of an office manager at each location who does most of the scheduling and check-in and a second person at each office whose focus is eligibility verification, referrals, benefit tracking, etc. Recently, a fifth position was added to handle more complex follow up on billing and collections.

These five support staff manage all of the office tasks associated with 21 providers at two locations. According to Kate, the implementation of practice management software enabled the practice to eliminate several unskilled positions that were focused on filing paperwork and answering phones with much more highly trained staff. "The new staff have the skills to make the most of our software and really take us to the next level as a practice," adds Kate.

Before adding the new billing position, the practice was already receiving some claim payments in as little as five days. The claims from one of their largest payers, Tricare, are usually turned around in 10 days or less. The denial rate is at 6% and continuing to decline. The average days in A/R for the past year are 33 but for the most recent month they were 20. And, the therapists are seeing a steady 400 patients a week. In addition, they can now count on a steady, predictable stream of revenue. "We submit our claims twice a day," explains Kate. "This allows us to constantly be receiving remittances also on a daily basis. The amount may vary but we know we can count on some revenue every day. We can also count on a check from Medicaid every week now. This is huge for us because we see a lot of Medicaid patients."

"We are light years ahead of where we were before Kareo," says Kate. "With the new full time biller who can closely monitor all of our claims and patient receivables, we expect to see ongoing improvements in all of our collections. That person is in Kareo all day just staying on top of our billing."

While the practice owners expected to see improvements in billing and collections, they were surprised how much they appreciated the Kareo reporting features. "We didn't realize were going to love the reporting so much," said Kate. "We can report on anything. We can actually see the big picture of our practice. Since the actions that you take in Kareo are saved in real time, we get the most up-to-date information and we can make decisions quickly with all the pertinent data at hand."

33 days
avg. A/R

5 days
claims received

6%
denial rate

✓ Conclusion

"Using the Kareo system has been a game-changer for our practice!" Kate said. "We were floundering, we had no way to track anything, or see a picture of our financial health. Since we began using Kareo, we have significantly reduced our overhead related to scheduling and claims processing, we are receiving claims payments in as little as five days and are reaping the benefits of knowing trends and statistics through Kareo's superb built-in reporting."