



SPECTRUM HEALTH

Vancouver, British Columbia

Founded in 1999, Spectrum Health is a provider of health care services for patients with HIV / AIDS, employing 7 physicians, a pharmacist, 5 medical office assistants, 2 nurses, 2 research assistants, and a part-time dietician. Spectrum has been involved in primary healthcare reform in BC for over seven years.

“The Wolf Medical Suite has allowed us to practice better medicine while increasing our efficiency. Since starting with Wolf, I save over an hour a day through the elimination of the paper shuffle. Wolf’s lab and medication tools allow early recognition of critical trends - ultimately resulting in better patient care.”

Robert Voigt, MD

Dr. Robert Voigt and his partners founded Spectrum Health in 1999 and were early participants in Vancouver Coast Health’s primary healthcare reform initiative. Dr. Voigt has been a Wolf EMR user for seven years and is still finding many efficiencies and costs savings through the system. Spectrum has been able to reduce the amount of staff required to support patients and physicians and run the office; they have also been able to save up to one hour per day per physician largely as a result of the use of templates and automation of many routine and time-consuming tasks.

On Getting Going with EMR

A self-confessed “technology geek,” Dr. Voigt had used computerized billing and scheduling software in previous private practice before opening Spectrum Health. Other doctors at Spectrum, however, were not so computer savvy. Spectrum is one of a few clinics who decided to use the full EMR solution right out of the gate.

Dr. Voigt explained: “Many clinics phase in their EMR solution. At Spectrum we set a “D-Day” for going live with the system; after that date, the entire system was computerized. The first week was certainly difficult for our staff, particularly those who’d never used an EMR before. But in retrospect it was exactly what we needed to get everyone moved over and productive on the new system quickly. We have a lot of residents who work here, and we find it’s very quick for them to get up to speed; they’re up and running in 15 minutes. Learning the system is not a big deal, the program is very intuitive.”

On Improving the Efficiency of the Clinic

Spectrum has improved the efficiency of the clinic through a number of measures, including:

- Templates – By creating templates for most of the major forms that must be filled out, physicians at Spectrum find they have more time to spend with patients. “Filling out a four page CPP form can now be done in less than three minutes.”
- Telephone-based referrals: Spectrum is a busy clinic, but “it’s a different kind of busy,” explained Voigt. “We participate in a population-based funding scheme, which means we receive funding based on the size of our patient population. This allows us to deliver a broader range of care to our patients with HIV / AIDS who require close monitoring, testing, and prescription drug therapies. Patients can call in refills, for example, without having to visit the office every time. This is enormously helpful, particularly for patients who are busy with work and can’t always be interrupting their work life for a simple refill.”
- Referral Letters: Dr. Voigt creates all his referral letters directly within the system – they flow directly from patient encounter notes, so he doesn’t have to re-type them to create a complete letter for the physician. He prints the letters directly to fax which takes the same amount of time as printing to paper while saving paper and the time of taking it to the staff for them to fax.
- Staffing: “Our EMR system costs us roughly the equivalent of one MOA, but it saves us one at least. It funds itself.”





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- Intra-office messaging: This has been a great time-saver for Spectrum. "There are no Post-It Notes on anything," explained Voigt, "All notes are automatically entered as part of a patient record. With electronic messages there's no shuffling around amongst a pile of papers; the message goes out and you know when it's done. For example, a patient can call in and ask if we can leave their RX at the front desk for them to pick up; the front desk can message the appropriate physician and we can fulfill the request and message back; this is very efficient for all of us, including the patient."

- Consult Letters – "With Wolf it takes me less than one minute to prepare a medical summary; this used to take up to 30 minutes."

He concluded: "Any physician starting from scratch would quite literally be out of their minds to go with paper."

Top Efficiencies for Spectrum Health

- Extensive use of templates for electronic forms saves hours of time
- Support for telephone-based referrals frees up patients and office staff
- Electronic referral letters and automatic faxing saves time and cost
- Reduced staffing requirements saves the equivalent of one MOA salary per year, offsetting the cost of the software. "It funds itself."
- Messaging vastly improves office communication
- Consult letters are a breeze; it takes 60 seconds to do what used to take 30 minutes

