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vein & vascular centers

Front-page Google Listing Drives Growth and Success for Pioneering Surgery Clinic

Jonathan Ellichman, MD, was one of the first to introduce one-stop outpatient vascular surgery in the United States. The concept was so successful that it is now a common model – meaning that his clinic faces stiff competition. How could he stay ahead of the game? In large part with the help of integrated technology from Kareo and PatientPop.

CHALLENGE

Stay at the Specialty Forefront

Having a cutting-edge clinical procedure with superior patient outcomes isn't always enough to dominate your niche. Just ask Jonathan Ellichman, MD, a seasoned vascular surgeon with a vision. In 2015 he opened Ellichman Vein and Vascular Centers in Memphis, TN, determined to shorten recovery times and decrease infection rates by treating patients at a dedicated outpatient clinic. His idea was a big success. Patients now receive surgical procedures and recover in a quiet, comfortable setting—without stepping foot in a hospital. Best of all, procedures cost about 35% less than they would in a hospital setting.

But things change quickly in today's medical environment. While outpatient vascular surgery seemed revolutionary just a few years ago, it is now a widely adopted practice, and Ellichman Vein now faces stiff competition from other clinics. It needed a way to distinguish itself as a thought leader and premier provider.

SOLUTION

Raise Awareness with Technology

Ellichman Vein had been a satisfied user of Kareo Clinical and Billing for years. So when its staff realized that their website needed revamping, they turned to PatientPop, which is currently integrating with Kareo into a new company called Tebra.

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"We weren't getting the traffic we needed to keep growing," says Kathy Stull, the clinic's billing and coding manager. "We also weren't showing up on Google searches, or getting the service we wanted from our website consultants. Since most patients go to the internet these days to check out physicians' reputations, we needed a really professional-looking site, with features that reflected our clinic's leadership role."

RESULTS

New Website Attracts Patients

PatientPop designed a new website for Ellichman Vein, incorporating advanced search engine optimization (SEO) strategies. The outcome has been front-page listings on Google searches, leading to a significant increase in clients coming from the internet rather than referrals.

"Our new PatientPop website is better in many ways," says Stull. "First, it's much easier to navigate. People find it more understandable, and can clearly see how we are different. Also, patients can click on an icon to request an appointment, rather than trying to phone the office. Because seniors comprise a large section of our demographic, it's important that our site be as simple as possible."

The biggest improvement, however, has come from search engine optimization. "We've received terrific value from PatientPop's online reputation features," she continues. "We're averaging 64 new patients a month since launching the new site, and have achieved a growth rate of 10%. This is very important because we're a surgical practice. We don't have a caseload of repeat patients, and need a steady stream of new ones to keep running. I'd say that 15% of all new patients are now finding us through the internet. Before it was almost all from referrals."

End-to-End Integration

The staff at Ellichman Vein and Vascular Clinic had trusted Kareo for years. "We use Kareo Clinical as our EHR, and do all of our billing in-house with Kareo as well. So we have been particularly pleased that PatientPop connects seamlessly. The two solutions operate as one," Stull notes.

Clients of Ellichman Vein can go to the Kareo patient portal to download intake forms. Kareo's Automated Patient Billing (APB) sends texts and emails when insurance has paid, and patients can click to pay by credit card. APB also sends friendly reminders to patients who are on payment plans.

"About 20% of our patients are now paying right away when they receive a text. It would probably be more if we weren't seeing mostly older patients, who are less comfortable with online services. Still, autobilling has improved our cash flow by about 20%," says Stull.

15% increase
in clients from
internet searches

10% growth in
client base

20% of patients pay
when texted

20% improvement
in cash flow

4.9 out of 5 stars
rating online

SEO eliminates need
for advertising

Reviews Help Reputation

The clinic sends a survey after each patient visit using PatientPop, and responds to every one, whether positive or negative. About 10% of patients choose to participate in the survey. Comments are posted on the internet.

"We almost always get at least four out of five stars, and rarely have a negative review," Stull comments. "The reviews help boost our rating on Google. We come up as either the first or second listing right after the paid ads, so we don't have to do any advertising ourselves."

Kareo Reports and Templates Improve Efficiencies

Stull uses a myriad of Kareo reports to keep her finger on the pulse of the clinic's business. "I run analytics to view summaries of charges, payments, claims and other key indicators. The reports show me the number of days it takes us to bill, and low long money has been sitting in AR. I can easily compare month to month. The Kareo dashboard shows me percentages of rejections and denials. It's an easy way to identify problems and fix them quickly. Because of the Kareo reports, I can run the practice more intelligently."

The clinic has also customized many of the templates that come with Kareo's EHR. "We tailored the office visit template so that it mirrors our own paperwork flow, making it much more useful and intuitive for us. We use a scribe, which converts the doctor's comments into e-notes and saves them securely in the cloud. We also customized procedure templates, so we can record surgery-specific data like procedure start and stop times, the length of sedation times, ultrasound treatments and other details that a different specialty wouldn't need. This really helps to streamline our workflow," Stull says.

Used in tandem, Kareo and PatientPop have contributed to Ellichman Vein and Vascular Centers' ongoing profitability and enviable competitive positioning. "I've used nine different software programs over the years, and the combination of Kareo and PatientPop is definitely the best," says Stull. "Not only are they the easiest to use, but they also work together in a way that just makes sense."