

## Ambulatory Surgery Center Uses Technology to Improve Efficiency, Patient Care

*reprinted with permission of the publisher from the January 30, 2012 issue*

Surprise surgery cancellations or delays were costing Presidio Surgery Center time and money and Jessie Scott, administrator of the center, knew she had to find a solution.

Six months after implementing a Web-based pre-op system, Presidio has lowered operating costs by substantially reducing day-of-surgery cancellations, reclaimed valuable nursing time and increased patient satisfaction.

“We had a problem that’s very common among free standing surgery centers,” Scott tells *Inside Healthcare IT*.

Prior to implementing One Medical Passport from Medical Web Technologies, Presidio relied on a full-time nurse to manage its pre-op process. Calls took 20-25 minutes per patient to gather medical histories.

Because patients weren’t always prepared for calls, medical histories were often incomplete or inaccurate. Consequently, it wasn’t uncommon for day of surgery surprises to result in surgeries being delayed or cancelled, which cost Presidio time and revenue.

Scott says that once the system was implemented and the doctors’ offices became familiar with telling their patients to go online to fill out the pre-op forms, Presidio began to see the benefits.

“Because patients fill out their medical histories online, at their convenience, information is more complete and accurate. As a result, cancellations caused by day-of-surgery surprises are no longer an issue, saving us an estimated \$46,000 a year,” Scott says.

*(continued on next page)*

This article is excerpted from Inside Healthcare IT (formerly Inside Healthcare Computing), and is (c) Copyright Algonquin Professional Publishing, LLC, P.O. Box 818, North East, MD 21901 USA, (443)206-4584 <http://www.insidehealth.com/>. E-mail: [custservice@insidehealth.com](mailto:custservice@insidehealth.com). It may not be reproduced, distributed, or altered from its original form without the express permission of the publisher.

When patients are added to Presidio's schedule, they receive an auto-generated telephone message asking them to go to Presidio's website to fill out their pre-op forms. Once the forms are completed, they are automatically forwarded to the pre-op nurse who reviews them for potential problems.

"Most of our patients don't have health issues, so she's able to go through the forms quickly, flag those who do and spend more time getting those issues resolved with the patients in a timely manner," Scott explains.

While Scott says that in general, computer literacy among patients hasn't been an issue, there have been a few instances where a patient has needed assistance. "Every once in a while, we'll have a patient who either can't fill out the forms online or doesn't want to. In that case, the pre-op nurse calls the patient and fills out the forms with him or her."

Scott says that on the front end, both patients and doctors have accepted the system as a matter of course.

"We've had just a few complaints from patients about having to fill out the paperwork online, but it's been pretty limited. We have an average of 500 surgeries per month and over the six month time frame that we've been using the One Medical Passport, I've had three complaints. Other than that, I don't think patients really think about it too much."

And Scott says that the response from members of the surgical team, particularly the anesthesiologists has been positive. "The anesthesiologists like the system because they're the ones who have to be concerned when the patient has health issues. And it's made things much easier for our staff."

Presidio has been able to reassign tasks, enabling caregivers to focus on patients. "The nurse who was previously doing pre-op information gathering full time is now doing it part time and spending the remainder of her time in the pre-op/post op unit with patients," Scott says.

While Presidio's experience with One Medical Passport has been a positive one, it hasn't been without challenges, particularly when it came to integrating it with other systems in the center.

Scott says that Presidio, which uses paper charts, has a number of standalone systems that address specific tasks within the center.

"One Medical Passport has a functionality where it's possible to prepopulate the online forms with name and address information," she explains. "We're not using that because we use another system called ScanChart which enables us to print out barcoded chart packs for individual doctors. When we scan the charts back into the system, because of the barcoding, the system knows exactly whose chart it is. I wish there was a way to integrate the two systems."

Despite the challenges of integrating the different systems, Scott says that the benefits far outweigh the challenges. "We know that more people are coming to our website because of the online forms. The system is making the experience of pre-op scheduling less frustrating and more efficient for our staff, and most importantly, it's creating a safer environment for our patients." ■