

Lemon Tree Family Medicine Sees 45% Average Revenue Collection Increase & Gains More Time with Patients with DrChrono RCM



Meet Dr. Sharon Lemmons

Dr. Sharon Lemmons graduated from Oregon Health Sciences University Medical School in 1998 and is board certified in family medicine. She moved back to Alaska to complete her residency in 2001 and opened Lemon Tree Family Medicine in 2015.



Meet Dr. Laura Johnston

Dr. Laura Johnston graduated from University of Michigan Medical School in 1996 and completed her residency at Mayo Family Clinic in Minnesota. She moved to Alaska soon after completing her residency and joined Lemon Tree Family Medicine in 2017.

About the Practice

Dr. Sharon Lemmons knows what it's like to be pressed for time. After completing residency, she jumped straight into the demanding world of urgent care, but the fast-paced nature meant short interactions with patients and little time with her children. Despite the risks involved in opening a solo practice, Dr. Lemmons decided that it was the right move.

"I wanted to be able to take time with my patients and build that physician-patient relationship and not feel like I'm being rushed through everything all the time like I'd seen at some of the larger practices," she said.

Among the to-do's for opening a practice is selecting an EHR. Dr. Lemmons' previous practice still used paper records, and she knew that her new office would have to be modernized and accessible through an iPad or a tablet. After much research, she chose DrChrono's Apollo plan-which includes the EHR and medical billing software-and hired part-time billers to submit claims in-house.

In December 2015, the Anchorage, Alaska-based practice officially opened its doors. Lemon Tree Family Medicine treats a wide array of conditions and patients, ranging from infections and allergies

to pregnancy and other women's health issues. The lack of behavioral health treatment in the region also means that they function as a de facto mental health practice as well.

Business Challenge

In 2017, the practice employed 2 part-time billers. Towards the end of the year, a second provider, Dr. Johnston, joined the team, increasing the number of claims being submitted to insurance. By 2018, one biller had left and the second biller was unfortunately unable to keep up with the heightened volume.

"We were doing our own coding, and we weren't seeing the level of reimbursement we were wanting to see or that we thought we should be seeing."

Reimbursement rates aside, a lack of billing resources also meant that claims sat in Accounts Receivable for far too long and often resulted in lack of payment.

"After reviewing some of the improvements that had happened with the Apollo service, we decided to give DrChrono's RCM plan a try."

Solution

In August 2018, Dr. Lemmons and Dr. Johnston officially moved forward with DrChrono's Apollo Plus plan, which provides full-service revenue cycle management (RCM). Lemmons gradually noticed that there was more money left over after paying vendors and staff. In September 2019, her husband, an IT project manager, ran a report to quantify the exact increase in reimbursements since signing on to the RCM service. The results surpassed their expectations. Remittances from January to September 2019 were already 19% higher than the total amount received in 2018, and there's been a 45% average increase in reimbursements between each corresponding month from 2018 to 2019. In March 2019, they saw their collections had jumped by 61% from the previous March.

Lemon Tree's patients have also benefitted from receiving consistent, concise billing statements. Only 58 statements were sent to patients prior to signing up for Apollo Plus. Over the course of the past year,

that number increased by 93%. In addition, claims stopped sitting in Accounts Receivable and were processed more quickly, leading to faster turnaround times on payment.

Conclusion

After analyzing previous and current practices, Dr. Lemmons realized that her practice had been undercoding when they were still billing in-house, thereby impacting potential reimbursements. By turning over the process to dedicated coders as well as keeping in regular contact with an account manager, Dr. Lemmons says they can spend more time with patients and even bring new patients on board as well.

"I definitely have felt that it's been a lot easier to not have to do all the coding just before the patient leaves. I find that my ability to move from one patient to the next is smoother, and I think we are seeing a few more patients because of it too."

In addition to the RCM service, DrChrono's EHR and integration with other tools makes it the perfect one-stop-shop. The practice was also quick to sign up for DeepScribe, a recent DrChrono partner whose product has helped both Lemmons and Johnston with their note-taking. Between transparency, mobility and ease-of-use, Lemmons states she is more than pleased with DrChrono.