PEDIATRIC PRACTICE ASSESSES ITS PATIENT SAFETY AS CATALYST FOR GROWTH

Dr. Ted Abernathy felt certain that his pediatric practice was doing a good job with patient safety, but was uncertain that he could prove it. An expansion of his pediatric practice was a catalyst to contact The Doctors Company for insights on whether his team was doing all it could to minimize risks and practice good medicine.

Pediatric & Adolescent Health Partners
Midlothian, Virginia

ACTION

A patient safety risk manager from The Doctors Company performed a comprehensive onsite assessment to evaluate the practice and identify any gaps in patient safety protocols. She used the Practice Risk INSIGHT to review office policies, procedures, and processes, focusing on eight key areas of practice management:

1. Orders, reports, and follow up
2. Consultation tracking
3. Appointment management
4. Patient information
5. Phone communication
6. Medications
7. Medical records
8. Informed consent

Chart reviews were conducted and Dr. Abernathy, other clinicians, and staff were encouraged to be open and honest in their discussions with the patient safety risk manager. They were assured that the information was being collected to improve patient safety and minimize risks, and not to punish staff for current practices.

The assessment took about a half day and the findings were discussed privately with Dr. Abernathy, the clinical team, and administrators. They were later shared with the entire 51-member staff in a collaborative, supportive manner. A customized action plan was introduced, which outlined ways to enhance patient safety, support quality programs, and minimize liability.

OUTCOME

Dr. Abernathy and his management team involved the staff in implementing The Doctors Company’s data-driven recommendations. Many involved improving communication and making full use of the electronic health record (EHR) system’s capabilities. As a result of the customized action plan:

- A new system sends a digital summary of phone discussions via e-mail or text, which becomes part of the patient’s EHR.
- A chart review committee now conducts periodic chart reviews.
- A peer review committee formed to ensure continuous performance improvement.
- The practice now tracks whether patients followed through with referrals to specialists, labs, and imaging tests.
- A new medication reconciliation process documents in the EHR when patients are continuing with prescribed regimens or have stopped or altered them.

“As the result of the assessment, I am more confident that our practice is doing a good job on patient safety. Any initial concerns among my partners that the assessment might result in increased premiums or reduced coverage quickly dissipated once our risk manager was onsite. She put everyone at ease. Two things did surprise me. Our staff, including providers, has a greater sense of job satisfaction because of the improvements we continue to make. And staff confidence has increased now that protocols and standards are working as intended. There is a sense of empowerment to highlight opportunities for improvement and work together to address them.”

—Ted Abernathy, MD, Managing Partner

VISIT THEDOCTORS.COM
CALL 800.421.2368 EXT. 1243