

Going Solo: Getting Bang for Your Buck



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AG Pain Management

Specializes in anesthesia and pain medicine

Simi Valley, CA

Let's face it. There's hardly a physician in a group practice who hasn't rehearsed giving their present employer notice that they are moving on. What physician isn't thrilled at the prospect of hanging their white coat on their very own hanger? Taking charge, controlling your destiny, creating your own policies and hiring your own staff. Sounds enticing? But wait. Don't pop the cork just yet. There's more to starting a specialty medical practice than meets the eye.

Consider Dr. Amit Gupta. In February 2012 he left a group practice to open AG Pain Management in Simi Valley, California, where he specializes in anesthesia and pain medicine.

“You have your rent, employees, business insurance, malpractice insurance, an EMR system, office supplies, and office computers. The list basically goes on and on. There's always something new to get or something that needs to be changed. WRS offered a solo practitioner the most affordable EMR system. I was just starting my pain medicine practice so I needed to get the best EMR system without having to dig deep in my wallet,” said Dr. Gupta.

Outpacing the Competition

Dealing with intense competition from other physicians who are elbowing their way into pain management territory can also be nerve wracking. “In any given area you have four or five physicians practicing,” acknowledged Dr. Gupta.

Spending time diagnosing pain patients is a critical maneuver in defending your turf. “It comes down to showing how my services are different from other providers that would make patients



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come to the clinic or for the primary care physician to refer patients to the clinic. All that patients want is pain relief. I spend a significant amount of time on the initial visit to determine the cause of their pain. Diagnoses are a very important factor in treating any sort of pain patient. Usually with my staff, there's about an 80 to 90 percent success rate after the first or second procedure and patients get about 70 percent relief. Ultimately, that is what has helped the practice move forward even with the intense competition around me," stated Dr. Gupta.



Documenting Initial Visits

Pain management EMR templates that are customized for patients' critical initial visits are making Dr. Gupta's documentation much easier. He can use templates for locations and needles because the visualizations are nearly the same."

Faxing Is Less Taxing

Integrated EMR faxing capabilities are a necessity for a pain management physician who needs to quickly access labs and other reports. Before choosing WRS, Dr. Gupta evaluated several EMR systems. He found that there weren't many systems that have the integrated incoming and outgoing fax. WRS fax queue reduces the time it takes to send and receive faxes. "WRS fax capability has been a boon to my efficiency. Labs, studies and MRIs can be viewed quickly because they are automatically faxed. There's no down time wasted waiting for these important results," stated Dr. Gupta.

More Comfortable

Noting that he used GE Centricity in the previous practice where he worked for 18 months, Dr. Gupta said that he evaluated five EMR systems before selecting WRS. "It comes down to what feels or looks comfortable. "I made the decision based on what was comfortable. WRS will make the practice more efficient. That's important as we continue to grow and see more patients. WRS makes the staff more efficient. With WRS we have eliminated the time it took the staff to scan documents."

"When I finish seeing patients I like to spend time meeting other doctors. WRS frees me up to do just that. also have more time for my hobbies."

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Having a patient portal can also make the transition from a group practice to a solo practitioner less painful. “I offer the patient portal system to all of my patients. Whenever the patients are initially in the clinic, they get an e-mail that is sent out automatically. I do encourage them to use it,” said Dr. Gupta.

Sharing Information Is Key

Sharing information with patients’ primary care physicians can be a drag on the precious time that a new physician needs to build a successful practice. Indicating that his patients have been suffering from pain for a few months to as long as 20 to 30 years, Dr. Gupta said, “By the time they come in they have been managed by their primary care. Their pain is not controlled. They come to see me to regain the basic functionality of their lives. “One of my main criteria in choosing an EMR was accessibility. WRS assists greatly with notes. When I see a patient, the primary care physician can get a faxed consult note from me right away. That is a major benefit,” said Dr. Gupta.



Trouble Shooting

Glitches in an EMR system can also be a drain on the smooth operation of a new pain management practice. “WRS support is excellent. I haven’t had a major problem, but if I have a question or concern I send a ticket in an e-mail and they get right back to me.”

E-Prescribing Takes Center Stage

Patient noncompliance can be a major deterrent to 100% treatment success rates that a pain management practice is shooting for. Having an EMR with an e-prescribing capability can go a long way to boosting patient compliance. “E-prescribing has been very smooth. I haven’t had any problems. The benefit is that it’s a good standard of care because everybody else provides it. E-prescriptions can be sent to a pharmacy from anywhere. A patient doesn’t need to get anything written on paper or a pad. It’s convenient for the patient, physician and pharmacy.”

Attracting new patients can be one of the hardest tasks for a solo practitioner to accomplish. While referrals are still one of the best ways to increase the chances of attracting new patients, an EMR can give a new practice a big edge. “I go to physicians’ offices, introduce myself and

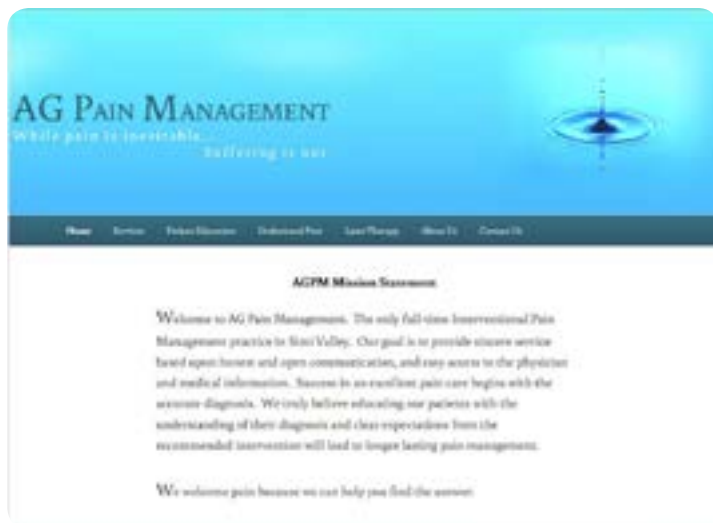
talk about my thoughts and ideas. I convey how I can provide my services to help them and their patients. Sometimes we do a lunch or a dinner meeting. But sending my consultation notes back to their primary doctor also helps me with marketing. With the EMR's incoming and outgoing fax system when any of my notes are done they are usually sent out in less than 24 hours to the referring physician," said Dr.Gupta.

A Good Teacher

Building a good, educational web site can also be a great way to build patient traffic. "I built my web site with the purpose of it being very simple so that any patient can go in and get education. I educate them and tell them to go to the web site because all the procedures I do are also based on PDF files. They can read and they can be educated. It does help with marketing. Sometimes patients go on the web site and that's how they are referred to me," said Dr. Gupta.

Learning Curve

The importance of selecting an EMR that is extremely user friendly cannot be underestimated. Dr. Gupta used GE Centricity at his former practice. "Centricity is based on bubbles and clicking



and there's a lot of repetition. That's the way they customize their templates. That was the difference. The WRS format was very comfortable for me. It's very reliable, consistent and it's really easy to learn."

So how did Dr. Gupta go about finding an EMR with all the features he required? "One of my colleagues referred me to Waiting Room Solutions. I had a good, reliable source and referral that actually led me toward the WRS EMR. I like it because it was developed by a physician. That's the reason I find it so comfortable. Judging it visually,

it has a clean look with drop down menus that you click, and they are organized with messaging and scheduling. You don't have to open a few pages or go to new pages to open up a new task," said Dr. Gupta.

Family Friendly

Like many new pain management solo practitioners who work tirelessly to free their patients of pain, Dr. Gupta still longs to spend time with his family. "My hobby is spending time with my family. I really thoroughly enjoy that hobby. After seeing patients, I can spend time with my family and at

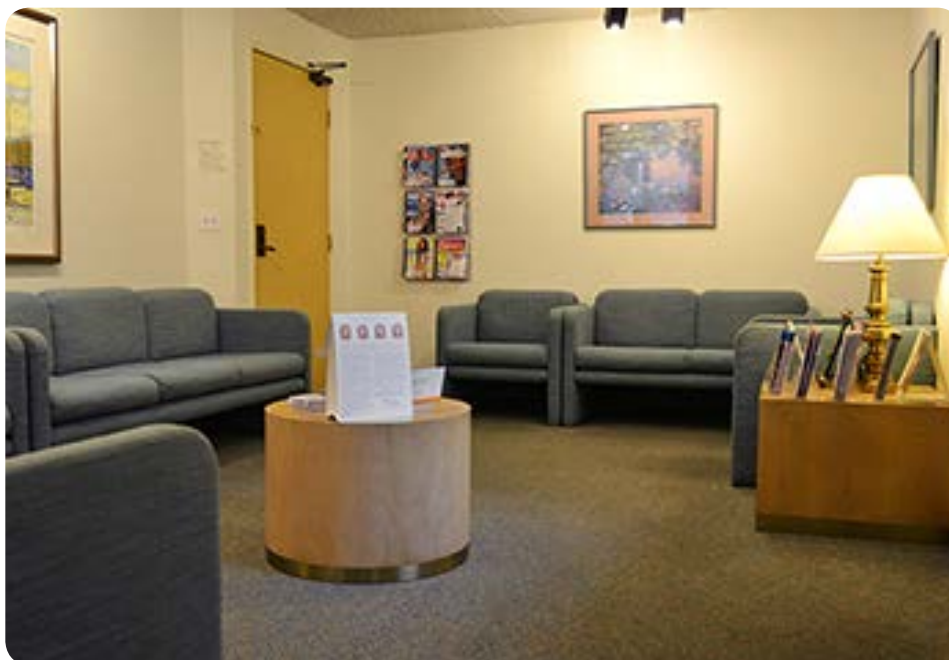
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the same time continue with the notes, finish up the notes or follow-up with a patient. I don't have to be in the clinic all the time to pursue medicine. You can use WRS anywhere and still manage patients if it's necessary. "When I finish seeing patients I like to spend time meeting other doctors. WRS frees me up to do just that. also have more time for my hobbies."

Despite the obstacles and challenges of opening a new pain management practice, Dr. Gupta is walking on the sunny side of the street. "It's been fun. I am really enjoying this whole experience. I really wanted to do this. I don't feel the frustration. The person I hired to run my practice has been a great asset. We are moving forward and steady. It hasn't been overwhelming yet."

When you have your own private practice you have more control, whether it's your staff or the practice you want to run. I had a vision of what I wanted to do with my own practice. My vision was providing good patient care for my patients and being able to get them in without having to wait. Having my own staff does make a big difference. When you are in a group practice the staff is assigned to you. When you run your own practice you can hand pick and customize your practice to your needs."

Finally, if you are thinking of starting your own practice, you may find Dr. Gupta's words of advice to be very encouraging: "You really want



to do this—to be on your own. For me, that's what I wanted for a certain time. Taking that first step is always the hardest, but once you take it you never look back. I've never looked back."