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Health IT analytics helps optimize big physician practice's operations

Allied Physicians Group PLLC, based in the hamlet of Melville in Long Island, N.Y., is in the second year of a project to extend health IT analytics from Dimensional Insight Inc. across its business and management operations and, eventually, to its [clinical services](#).

"What we want to do is have a full-breadth [analytics package](#) that we can use at our physician group, and really run our business optimally," said Robert Creaven, executive vice president of operations at Allied, in a presentation at Dimensional Insight's annual user group conference here in early June.

About 150 people representing dozens of Dimensional Insight customers attended the two-day conference at the Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor hotel.

The physician-owned Allied employs about 150 pediatricians and clinicians. Employees throughout the practice -- from front-desk staffers to doctors -- use the analytics program, which features a simple user interface. And while the business is built around 32 individual profit centers, the umbrella group handles key business functions including IT, [HR](#), administration, accounting, taxes, purchasing and marketing.

A key driver of the ongoing move to analytics throughout the enterprise is the shift to [incentive-based contracts](#) with the group's insurance payers, and away from [fee-for-service](#), Creaven said.

What we want to do is have a full-breadth analytics package that we can use at our physician group, and really run our business optimally. **Robert Creaven**Allied Physicians Group

"This is part of the reason we needed [a tool like Dimensional Insight](#)," Creaven said. "We have to capture that data better and report to the insurance companies we work with, and report all the [quality numbers](#) that are available, and ensure that the quality monies that are supposed to be coming to us are accurate and timely."

Dimensional Insight, a health IT analytics vendor based in Burlington, Mass., has made significant inroads in healthcare since it was founded 25 years ago. While Dimensional Insight is used widely in the food and beverage and supply chain management verticals, its Diver analytics program has seen broad adoption in [business intelligence](#) and clinical applications in healthcare.

While not a native health IT company, Dimensional Insight consistently ranks among the top in healthcare [business intelligence vendor surveys](#), alongside leading health IT analytics vendors and major IT vendors such as Health Catalyst, McKesson, Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, Information Builders and SAP.



Robert Creaven

Meanwhile, Creaven noted that Allied is surrounded by [big hospital systems](#) that are constantly buying up physician practices, but it wants to retain its independence, and a powerful health IT analytics tool can help them do that.

"The way we grow is by having provider-partner-owners who want to have a say in their business and its direction join us and not be controlled by outside forces," he said.

A couple of challenges the practice faced when it was shopping for an analytics system was keeping costs down and obtaining software it could configure and adapt as the practice grew and added new specialties.

After it installed Diver and validated data from a legacy business intelligence system, Allied adopted a [data governance](#) program that could accommodate individual practices, but also benefit the entire group.

As configured for the practice, the program has several major tabs:

- an executive summary view from a revenue-expenditure perspective, either by individual practice or the group overall;
- production, from office visits to hospital rounding and patient populations;
- payments;
- operations, which is a function used by office managers;
- [medical coding](#) compliance; and
- a measure dictionary that defines all the data elements in the system.



Michael Marturiello

Another Allied executive, Michael Marturiello, senior vice president of finance and accounting, said the health IT analytics system provided another advantage to the far-flung group: transparency.

The group's 65 partner-owners can look at divisional budget numbers inside the corporate [general ledger](#) at any time and, thus, have more information to plan expenditures such as bonuses or vaccine purchases. This capability reduces the complexity of business decision-making for the doctors, Marturiello said.



[Shaun Sutner](#) asks:

What are some features to evaluate before buying an analytics tool for a healthcare setting?

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"Nobody wants to look at a general ledger," he said. "We don't want our doctors looking at numbers all day. We want them seeing patients."