

## On Long Island, Allied Physicians Group's Ambition to Become a Data-Driven Organization

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by Rajiv Leventhal

It was a little more than a year ago when organizational leaders at the Long Island, N.Y.-based Allied Physicians Group realized that they were in need of a flexible analytics platform that would span across its 35 office locations, and that wouldn't be too complicated for its group of 150 pediatricians. The health network also wanted a solution that would help to drive down overall costs while increasing the quality of its pediatric care delivery.

At the time, there were simply too many disparate analytics to help Allied Physicians Group successfully run a business, says Robert Creaven, the organization's executive vice president of operations. "We were able to say this division does this and this division does that, but we didn't have a clear picture on what we did as an organization or as a whole, so we needed a solution that could take all of our data points from various systems and put them into one centralized location," he says.

Certainly, given the complex nature of healthcare today, hospitals and healthcare providers often employ hundreds of disparate data sources to capture necessary insights, often preventing key decisions from being made efficiently.

As such, in April 2016, Allied Physicians Group selected a technology platform from Dimensional Insight, a Burlington, Mass.-based developer of business intelligence (BI) solutions. At each one of Allied Physicians Group's sites, notes Creaven, there is a need to make sure that that site is "healthy" for the partners who own that site, that the site is profitable, and that it is meeting quality standards and financial qualifications. "So when you have [35] locations that are all under one Tax ID number, but that all operate and run differently, are all managed differently, and all have different financial obligations, you need a platform that can pull data together and do comparatives," he says. Indeed, with this platform, says Creaven, there is the ability to look across all 150 providers and 35 locations, take any one location/provider, and look at how that location/provider stacks up compared to other physicians with like payers.



*Robert Creaven*

One area in which the tool has specifically helped Allied Physicians Group already in the time it's been implemented, is helping to build a platform for the office managers, Creaven says. This has allowed them to have both their own data set and page within Dimensional Insight. "Since we are in pediatrics, this means that well-child visits, visits past due, the patients' ages, appointments scheduled, and cancellations are all central to our office managers running their practices efficiently. So we have a platform that's for our providers and our business people, but another one specifically for our office managers, which includes what they need to see on a daily basis. That has really helped things operationally, in terms of how they run their own divisions. They now have the information at their fingertips rather than doing guesswork like in the past," he says.

As a result, from a business, operations standpoint, Creaven notes, all that information available at the fingertips has been gigantic; "it's changed everything about our business," he says. "We now consider ourselves an analytics-driven business that can pinpoint trends, problems, and areas where we need to improve."

Creaven says that Allied Physicians Group first started out with this operational platform, and now is moving on to doing **revenue** cycle, meaning aggregating all financial data onto this platform. "This will result in having one single location for all of our P&L statements and our cash flow statements, all of our accounts payable, and payroll, all in our centralized platform," he says. And what's more, to start the third quarter, they will have all of their quality metrics and quality data in the platform, which Creaven says "is huge for us with our payers and our contracts."

Comparing the past to the present, Creaven reflects on how things have changed in just a short amount of time. "[Previously], I'd have to go to go three or four different platforms if I wanted to look at a location, division, or region, and pull everything together. Now I have everything in one location,

and I can pull data from anywhere and help paint a broader picture that will help guide our company in a direction that wasn't even possible before," he says.

More generally speaking, Creaven feels that for any organization with 25 or more providers, there is no chance to function in today's environment without a broad-based analytical platform. He says bluntly, "The payers want to pay for what they believe is good medicine and all of that comes from data and statistics. So when we meet with payers, we are able to say here is all of our data, here is our billing, here's how frequently we are immunizing our patients, here's our vaccine rate, and here's our hospitalization rate. We have that data at our fingertips now, and that will help us get better and more lucrative contracts. If you don't have that data to present to the payers, you are playing a guessing game."

And what's more, he notes as insurers and providers continue to work on paying for quality measures, if the organization doesn't have the quality data to either verify what it is saying, substantiate how much it is paying, or why it is paying that number, then "you are just accepting that without any question. We can now get a quality check for an incentive we were promised, and we can verify if we were paid correctly or not," Creaven says. "And then we can go to the payer and say that our data is so much better than even what you required, so we can then go to the table and renegotiate for a better deal." He adds, "In today's market, you can't be a big physician group or healthcare organization, especially with the managed care incentives and quality programs [that exist], without an analytics platform behind you. I can't imagine doing it."

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