

Healthcore — Slicing out unnecessary overhead to invest more in the practice of medicine

Setting up a new internal medicine practice in the highly competitive affluent North Dallas medical market can be a daunting venture for a physician. That's exactly the challenge that faced Dr. Paul Cary, a specialist in internal medicine, when in 1998 he sought to launch a new internal medicine group along with several other internists.

While he had the support of Presbyterian Hospital, which is one of the dominant players in the North Dallas area, Dr. Cary still had to overcome the challenges of starting up a new practice from scratch and developing a patient base. This included coming up with a new name, letterhead, business cards, finishing out a new office, hiring office staff, creating scheduling systems and setting up billing and collection systems.

"When you are an employed physician working for someone else, you don't care as much about the business side," remembers Dr. Cary. "But when you are in business for yourself, it's critical. As much as you prefer



to focus only on the practice of medicine, the business issues will spell the life or death of your practice."

Dr. Cary was already familiar with The Health Group, which specializes in practice management for small to medium size groups, since it managed some other nearby physician practices. As a first step, David Loomis, CEO of The Health Group, met with all the physicians and discussed their goals and vision related to the new group practice. Dr. Cary remembers that the first task was coming up with a name for the new practice.

"The typical mistake most physicians make is to come up with a generic and descriptive name like Internal Medicine Associates of Dallas," explains Loomis. "But that type of name cannot be protected or trademarked. It's also likely to be involved in a name conflict with another entity already using something similar and because it's

more than two or three words, is likely to be turned into an undesirable acronym by consumers."

The Health Group brought in one of their resource companies that specializes in developing new corporate identities for physician groups. After much discussion, the new internal medicine practice liked the proposed name "Healthcore" which uses the image of a sliced open apple. The image of an apple, which is a symbol for health, is sliced in half to reveal the center core, further making the inference to *internal* medicine. The play of words between "healthcare" and "Healthcore" made the new group's name instantly memorable and one that stood out among the many other competitors with bland



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corporate identities. Letters to referral sources, announcement ads and other communication strategies soon followed to launch the group to the public.

"There were other management companies who presented to us early on," remembers Dr. Cary. "But we were so impressed with The Health Group because they seemed to have the most comprehensive program not only for start up but also for operations, billing and accounting."

Dr. Cary urges physicians starting out in medicine today to use professional business management. "It's daunting to try and manage your practice by yourself," Dr. Cary says. "It's simply too hard to see patients all day long, then take off the doctor hat

and put on the manager hat at 6 pm. There simply isn't time. It's two full-time jobs."

"The Health Group allows the doctors in our group to just practice medicine while the office staff handles the management of the office," says Dr. Cary. "That frees up

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time for us to see more patients which in turn increases our billings. We do better financially spending our collective time with patients rather than running an office."

"Healthcore has also had better ability to attract and maintain good office personnel, because the staff is working for professional managers," adds Dr. Cary. "The Health Group has helped my practice to recruit an exceptional office staff. If I were to hire them, these people would have a limited career path, and after a couple years, I'd eventually lose them and have to start all over again with new trainees. With The Health Group, the managers have a career path with the practice management firm, so they can grow as The Health Group and its clients grow. So we continually have access to well-trained staffers."

Dr. Cary remembers back to previous groups he'd been in where the office didn't run nearly as well. "I can appreciate where we are at today better than others," he adds, "because over the years I've had experience with about four different management entities where things did NOT go so smoothly. The Health Group is by far the best I have come across. So I don't take smooth sailing for granted."



David Loomis of The Health Group and Dr. Paul Cary, internal medicine.

The Health Group, based in Dallas, Texas, is a comprehensive physician practice management company founded in 1978. Unlike most practice management companies, The Health Group specializes in the unique needs of the small to medium size physician group. These groups typically present a significant management challenge because they often cannot afford computerized record systems purchased by large groups. The Health Group is able to spread the cost of such systems over many practices thereby providing economy of scale.

