

# Getting InTouch With Our Practice

By Glen Gitterman, PT, MS, CSCS

I'm Glen Gitterman, co-owner of Allied Health & Rehabilitation, a two-location physical, occupational and speech therapy rehabilitation practice located in Connecticut. We see an average of 32-plus patients per day and I suspect that our challenges are typical of clinics our size: Driving in new business while watching the bottom line and making sure that our therapists are productive, our revenue is collected and, of course, our clients are happy.

Two years ago, we moved from using an outside billing service to bringing billing in-house. Our need to update our scheduling system and other systems was long overdue. We chose InTouch Practice Management system to accomplish this. We chose to attend the APTA Private Practice Section Annual Conference to investigate all of the serious software vendors available and identify which would best suit our needs, both operationally and financially. We settled on InTouch Practice Management System for several reasons: the software was very user friendly, it appeared to do what we needed (billing, scheduling, reporting, easy customization, etc.), it could grow with us and, most important, it was very easy on the wallet.

Before, during, and after the conference, we continued our investigation of other software options, some new and unknown, some old and established, and some web-based. The old guard looked the part, stale and dated. Some web applications appeared promising, but we didn't like the fact that *our* data and the software program resided with others. What if we ever had a falling out or decided to change vendors? Finally, some of the newer software vendors looked great, but were very pricey! The idea of laying out thousands of dollars was not something we were prepared to do. Within 30 days of returning from the conference, we decided that InTouch's "easy out" monthly subscription-based pricing made it impossible to resist. We closed the deal.

The transition from an outsourced billing service and an offsite software program to an in-house inclusive practice management software system certainly had its bumps. We learned, sometimes the hard way, about the pros and cons of going this route and its potential effect on cash flow. Ultimately, it was the right decision and gave us back the control and information we needed. We have found the InTouch staff to be sympathetic and very willing to make changes to the software to accommodate our practice's needs.

Using our existing hardware, our initial requirement for the software was to take over patient demographics, billing, and scheduling. Our goal was to reduce the use of paper for these daily

functions. The software comes with the ability to do all of this, and your staff can customize the database to meet your clinic's needs. We have been using the operational reports to track referrals, productivity, revenue, cash flow, and other key business indices. InTouch has listened and expanded its reporting ability based on our input. They have worked closely with us, for example, to produce attorney and patient invoices.

The administrative time and cost savings has been tangible since transitioning to InTouch. Through our server, we have the ability to tie our two locations together—viewing them on an individual basis or looking at them together to see what is happening at each office without having to make any phone calls or fax reports to each location. The Internet is used only as a way to connect the two locations.

The InTouch staff came to our office to educate our entire staff. It took less than a day to start using the software. We have collaborated with InTouch in the development of documentation forms, and we are in the process of using the progress notes and documentation portion of the software. The documentation component relies primarily on a "paragraph builder" methodology that is somewhat time-consuming to set up initially but really gives us the flexibility to make our notes and reports not seemed "canned." There's also a very handy feature allowing different therapists to use their own phrases, if they wish, and bring previous notes together for tweaking. The InTouch crew has been quite responsive to our suggestions to make the documentation system better suit our needs.

We learned that software choice is not just about functions and price; it's about the relationship we have with the people behind the product and how far they would go to assist and listen to us. No matter how good software is, no matter how reasonable the cost, if the company does not stand behind their product then it might as well be free—it would have no value. While the InTouch support has always been good, I was particularly impressed on one occasion when our main server crashed and InTouch suggested and allowed us to use one of their servers while ours was being repaired so we could continue our daily operations.

We have seen InTouch evolve over the course of our relationship—both the software and their user-base have grown substantially. Would we make the same choice if we were to do it all over again? The answer: Yes, we would! ■

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