

The Latest Innovation in Cardiovascular Product Line Development: Pocket EKG Benefiting Patients, Physicians, and Payors

Introduction

As the baby boomers continue to age, they are looking for ways to maintain health and vitality-and are more than willing to pay for it. Health systems are beginning to capitalize on this desire for preventative medicine in this new age of consumerism in health care. Hospitals also realize that physicians are key to the survival of their organization, and they need to be "courted" as well. There is a new type of clinical marketing program available that accomplishes both of these goals: Pocket EKG and the Healthy Heart Exam.

To understand this concept in depth, it will be broken down in the following manner:

1. The clinical benefits to the patient.
2. Implementation
3. Promotional value to the hospital through patient and physician relations.
4. Sponsorship

Three different hospitals and their results will be highlighted: Providence Everett Medical Center Health System in Everett, Washington; Tucson Heart Hospital (Medcath) in Tucson, Arizona; and Carolina Regional Heart Center Health System in High Point, North Carolina. Each of these very different organizations implemented this program with very unique and interesting findings.

Clinical Benefits to Patient

The Pocket EKG and the Healthy Heart Exam is based around the Pocket EKG Card. It is a heart identification card the size and shape of a credit card designed to fit in a patient's wallet. On the card front is the patient's complete

cardiac history, as well as the sponsoring organization's name, logo, address and phone number; and on the card back is the patient's baseline EKG. In essence, the patient is carrying a business card of the health system-with their baseline EKG included.

The clinical value for a patient to have their baseline EKG at all times is documented: "There is a 54% reduction in unnecessary hospitalization when a physician has access to a prior ECG."

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According to the American Journal of Medicine, 79% of physicians find a baseline ECG to be extremely valuable when making diagnostic and treatment decisions for heart patients.

"The resting ECG and wallet card are like a photograph: the subject of the photo may never change, but if it does, you have a comparison," Greg Lawson, MS, Center for Preventive Cardiology, Heart Institute at Providence Everett Medical Center.

Implementation of the Pocket EKG and the "Healthy Heart Exam"

Each organization has its own internal structure that dictates the success of the program. The marketing department at Providence Everett wanted to implement a new campaign that would bring in more patients to their cardiac facility. They wanted to educate the local community on their heart program so that patients would stay in the area for their treatment as opposed to commuting to Seattle-30 minutes away. To achieve this, they

developed a “Healthy Heart Exam” that included the following:

- Resting EKG with a Pocket EKG Card
- Consultation with a cardiac rehabilitation specialist
- Personal wellness and heart profile
- Complete cholesterol analysis
- Blood glucose test
- Blood pressure and pulse check

The marketing department ran extensive publicity via the airways and print media to inform the community as to the availability of this new program and asking people to call for an appointment at a cost of \$49 per patient. The logistics of the program are as follows:

1. Patient calls in directly to Cardiac Rehab Department to set up the appointment. At this time, patient is scheduled and sent a packet of information that they are to fill out and bring to the exam.
2. Exams are scheduled two mornings per week and run through the Cardiac Rehab Department of the hospital. Each exam takes 20 minutes.
3. Patient brings Cardiac Risk Assessment form completed to the exam along with a self addressed envelope to their family physician (if they choose so that their physician can be notified as the results of their resting EKG.)
4. Testing is performed and the resting EKG is routed to the cardiology department within the hospital for a designated cardiologist to interpret.
5. Once EKG is interpreted, it is sent to Cardiemark LLC (outsourcing company) to be made into the Pocket EKG Card.
6. Patient receives results of all other testing during the appointment.
7. Patient’s primary care physician is sent resting EKG and their cholesterol panel if patient has chosen that option.
8. Patient receives Pocket EKG Card in the mail along with a letter that states the patient’s EKG

interpretation as Normal, Minor Abnormal, or Abnormal. The letter suggests that if their interpretation is abnormal, they need to seek a physician’s advice. A physician referral phone number is also included in the event that the patient does not have a cardiologist.

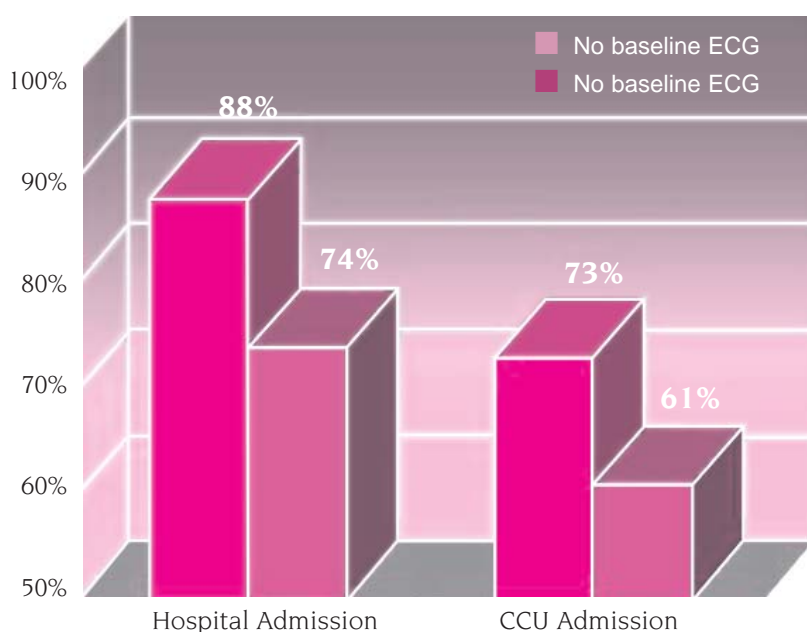
Promotional Value to Hospital – Patient Relations

Within the first four months of the campaign, 400 people had been screened at Providence Everett. June Mundell, age 72, received the results of her EKG as abnormal and sought her family

physician’s advice. She was referred to a cardiologist within the Providence System, who then in turn referred her to a cardiovascular surgeon also within the system. Ms. Mundell had cardiovascular surgery at Providence Everett Medical Center that included five-bypasses, as well as repairs of her mitral valve and the congenital “hole” that was discovered between the two upper chambers of her heart. Her son, alarmed by the abrupt discovery of his mother’s condition, scheduled his own Healthy Heart Exam while she still was in the hospital. Fortunately, his EKG was normal.



Figure 1. Impact on the Availability of a Prior Electrocardiogram on the Triage of the Patient with Acute Chest Pain



J. Gen. Intern Med 1990; 5:381-388

Ms. Mundell has fully recovered after her surgery and is back to her walking program. She keeps a supply of Healthy Heart Exam flyers to pass out to people she knows. "Fortunately, I didn't have a heart attack. It might have progressed, but I found out about its possibility before it could occur."

The marketing department at Providence Everett Medical Center "was doing 'high fives' and celebrating the tremendous success of their marketing efforts," Teresa McGovern, Director of Marketing. They interviewed Ms. Mundell and ran her testimonial in a newsletter that went out to the community. The response was positive. In 2000, Providence Everett budgeted for 500 Healthy Heart Exams and planned on doubling that in 2001.

Promotional Value to Hospital – Physician Relations

The Pocket EKG and Healthy Heart Exam are not only designed to promote patient relations but physician relations as well. This is accomplished in two ways: the card itself and the letter that accompanies the card to the patient.

On the front of every Pocket EKG card there is a place to highlight both the primary care physician and the cardiologist by name and phone number. Thus, all the medical care providers associated with the patient are on one card. This creates a medical care alliance between the patient, primary care physician, cardiologist and the hospital.

The letter is also instrumental in building these medical care partnerships between the patient,

physician and hospital. When a patient receives their Pocket EKG Card in the mail, a letter with their EKG interpretation is also included. This letter is customized to the needs of the organization and can include the following: physician referral phone number at the hospital or a list of physician names, addresses and phone numbers. Thus, the health system is "partnering" with the cardiologists that support their organization and sending contact information on those physicians directly to the patients following their "Healthy Heart Exam." In short, this program then becomes a practice enhancement tool for the physicians.

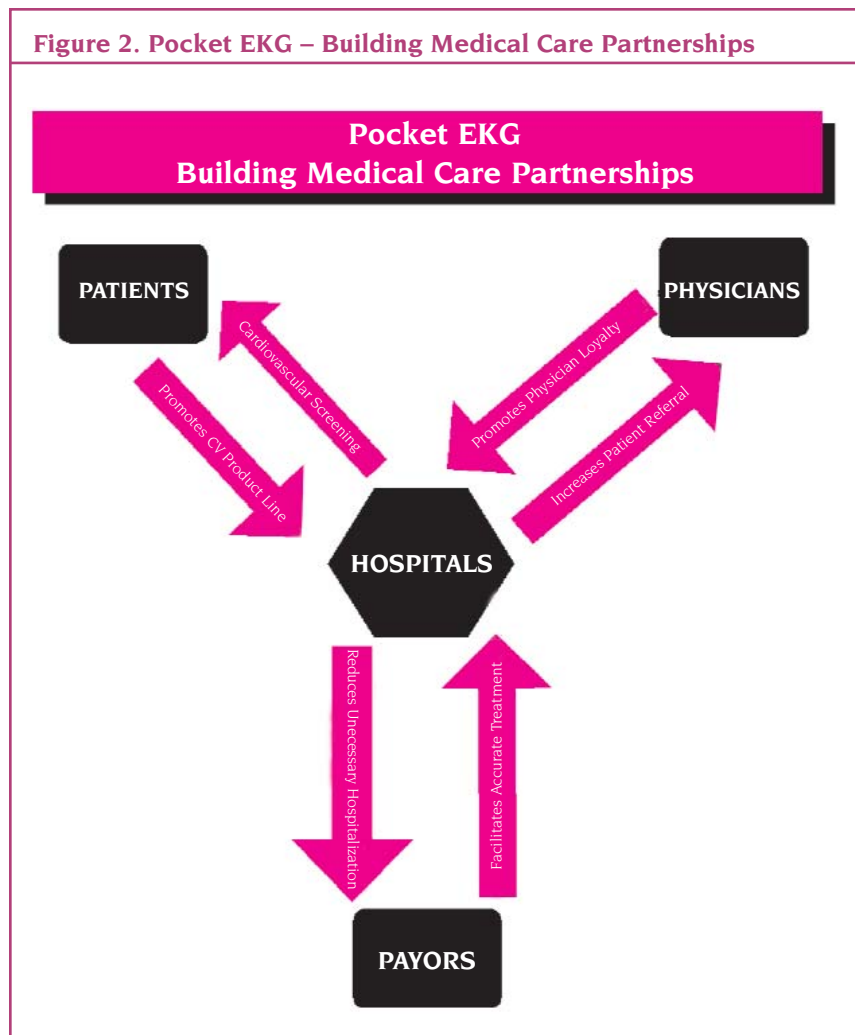
"We find that many patients are oftentimes hesitant to contact cardiologists directly-this service offers them the permission to do so. The focus of the Pocket EKG Program is to promote early detection and optimal treatment of patients with heart disease," William Nyitray, M.D.

Tucson Heart Hospital has designed their follow up letter to the patient with a complete physician list that includes names, addresses and phone numbers of all physicians supporting their hospital. Thus building medical care partnerships between the patient, physician, and the hospital.

Sponsorship

Carolina Regional Heart Center in High Point, North Carolina is in a very competitive market place. This organization decided to use the Pocket EKG Program in two very different ways:

1. The Pocket EKG Card is offered to the patients seen in their cardiologist's office as a value added service. In this scenario, the patient receives their card with a HEDIS/NCQA patient satisfaction survey based on their visit to the cardiologist's office. The data from the surveys are collected and compiled by Cardiomark and the physician prac-



tice receives a quarterly report. These survey reports are used to improve practice efficiencies and optimize payor contracting.

2. The Pocket EKG Card is also offered to the community through an EKG Screening and Healthy Heart Exam as outlined earlier. Thus, the Pocket EKG Card becomes a patient recruitment vehicle for the organization.

Carolina Regional Heart Center also partnered with Bayer and Berlex to help fund

the Pocket EKG Program. Both of these pharmaceutical companies are highlighted on the front of the card as well. "Our patients appreciate the clinical value of the card and it becomes part of their baseline medical evaluation. We see the Pocket EKG Program as a means to help our patients and add value to those physicians who support our heart program," Pete Turner, Director of Marketing, Carolina Regional Heart Center.

For more information on the Pocket EKG Clinical Based Marketing Program contact 1.800.589.4949 or visit the website at www.pocketekg.com.