

BBC Global Case Study: Aggarwal Ophthalmology

Virtual Assistants Help Ophthalmology Practice Enhance Operations and Patient Experience





Introduction

Aggarwal Ophthalmology is a comprehensive ophthalmology practice with offices in Taylor and Livonia, MI, offering general ophthalmology and inpatient services for traumatic conditions and emergency care. When a long-term employee left the practice for family reasons, finding a replacement was a serious challenge.

"The job market was tight and everyone here was getting overwhelmed," said Dr. Anju Aggarwal, MD, board-certified ophthalmologist at Aggarwal Ophthalmology. "At the same time, our high-volume patient days jumped from 40 to 50 patients to 60 to 70. We weren't able to find anyone who could handle the job."

The staffing situation started having an impact on day-to-day operations. Phone calls were going to voicemail and taking longer to return, which affected how quickly patients could be seen. They also started falling behind in billing. That's when Aggarwal Ophthalmology first contacted BBC Global to inquire about healthcare virtual assistant services.

Healthcare Virtual Assistant Relieves Strain on Staff, Improves Response to Patients

Aggarwal Ophthalmology had sophisticated systems and technological infrastructure in place, including an integrated communications platform, a cloud-based EMR system, and an online portal for insurance verification. Their primary focus was to find a turnkey solution and reliable, highly trained virtual assistants who wouldn't require constant supervision.

"I felt like other providers were basically finder's fee-type companies," Dr. Aggarwal said. "If someone was sick or had a bad internet connection, it was my problem. That's not something I want to do. Also, we're not a huge conglomerate that could assign someone to oversee virtual assistants. I want to focus on patient care. We need professional people, and we felt like we would get that from BBC. They take care of technology and backup staff, and that gives us peace of mind."

Richard, BBC Global's healthcare virtual assistant, answers phones, makes reminder calls, answers patient questions, takes information about prescriptions so they can be filled quickly, and transfers urgent patients to the appropriate person. He also verifies patient insurance and confirms the day before the appointment.

"Insurance verification alone has been a huge help because we were so overwhelmed," Dr. Aggarwal said. "With his work ethic and technical expertise, Richard is able to check insurance and update copays, which change from time to time. He can also create an alert if someone has a high-deductible plan so the staff knows the patient has to pay a deposit when they arrive. This has decreased our backend billing because we're catching these issues before the patient steps into the office without going back and forth."

Results: "BBC has allowed us to be more patient-focused"

"Patients have said how quickly their calls are answered and how relaxed Richard is," Dr. Aggarwal said. "That's what keeps patients coming to our offices. When patients need a prescription refilled, they call once. Richard takes down their information and enters it into the system. The prescription is called in within 24 hours. When our staff was overwhelmed, patients were calling several times a day and waiting on hold. Richard has changed the whole flow of the office."

Because administrative tasks and patient calls are processed so smoothly, Richard is viewed as part of the team by both staff and patients. In fact, patients generally have no idea that any work is being outsourced.

"Initially, our staff was not enthusiastic about this idea," Dr. Aggarwal recalls. "They thought it would be more work for them. Now, they think he's the best thing to happen to this practice. Everyone is using Slack for communication because of Richard. He also showed us how to use the communication function in our EMR system, which has made us more efficient."

Dr. Aggarwal has been so impressed with Richard that she has discussed the possibility of having him assist with additional billing work and follow up with insurance rejections either through the portal or by calling insurance companies. Another virtual assistant is being considered so a portion of Richard's current duties can be offloaded.

Ultimately, Aggarwal Ophthalmology's partnership with BBC Global has made it possible for the practice to stay focused on its mission and meet the needs of patients.

"We just want to provide exceptional patient care," Dr. Aggarwal said. "We're a relatively small practice, not part of a huge, hospital-based system. BBC has allowed us to be more patient-focused and provide the kind of experience patients expect. It's great for our practice and, more importantly, great for our patients."



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