

Client Achievements

Prescription pricing tool helps lower medication costs



Atrium Health

Key Benefits

- Providers switched drugs more than **1,000** times
- Patients saved more than **\$1,064,000**

“Almost every day, I have patients tell me they aren’t taking their medication the way I prescribed because they can’t afford it. I feel a certain professional responsibility to try and manage my patients’ health care in a cost-effective way so they can actually receive the care I intend them to have.”

Jeffery Cleveland, MD
Medical Director

Rising prescription costs and how to pay for needed medications is a concern for many. A Kaiser Family Foundation study found 29% of patients said they did not take prescription medicine as directed due to the high cost.¹ Atrium Health, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, began utilizing Real-Time Prescription Benefits, a drug pricing application embedded within its electronic health record (EHR), to help patients save money at the pharmacy.

“Almost every day, I have patients tell me they aren’t taking their medication the way I prescribed because they can’t afford it,” said Jeffery Cleveland, MD, medical director. “I feel a certain professional responsibility to try and manage my patients’ health care in a cost-effective way so they can actually receive the care I intend them to have.”

The solution, powered by Cerner, allows providers to see the price of a medication based on that patient’s specific insurance coverage while prescribing it. Insurance information is connected to the EHR, and the provider can see the actual cost to the patient and if there are less expensive alternatives including generic options or day supply changes.

“It automatically pops up,” said Cleveland. “I can see it in near-real time and click a button, and then easily transition from one prescription to another. It’s elegantly designed and in the physician’s workflow.”

From implementation in September 2018 through September 2019, providers switched prescription drugs more than 1,000 times and saved patients more than \$1,064,000.

“I was prescribing medicine for a patient. Their first choice was going to cost \$373 a month,” said Cleveland. “I was able to find a generic alternative that cost \$20 a month.”

Client Information

- Nearly 7,400 beds
- 39 hospitals
- 940 care locations
- 62,000 employees
- 12.5 million patient encounters
- HIMSS Stage 7

“We see this as a big win, not just for patients, but also for the physicians in terms of working with their patient. We’ve long been receiving feedback from providers wanting to do the right thing for their patients and trying to find the lowest cost alternatives.”

Jeffery Cleveland, MD
Medical Director

Offering medications that patients can more readily afford, can make it easier for patients to take their prescriptions as prescribed.

“It all plays into medication adherence,” said Matt Kern, IT director. “I think it’s a vicious cycle. If you can’t afford your medications, you’re not taking medications. But then maybe you end up seeing your doctor more, or maybe visit an emergency department. Then it’s contributing to the overall cost of health care.”

“We see this as a big win, not just for patients, but also for the physicians in terms of working with their patient,” said Cleveland. “We’ve long been receiving feedback from providers wanting to do the right thing for their patients and trying to find the lowest cost alternatives.”

¹ “Public opinion on prescription drugs and their prices,” Kaiser Family Foundation, November 20, 2019, <https://www.kff.org/slideshow/public-opinion-on-prescription-drugs-and-their-prices/>