Dr. and Mrs. Robert Carr of Umatilla, Oregon, a husband and wife team, have implemented an ONC-ATCB certified system with the DentiMax Electronic Health Records (EHR) software. The Carrs’ overall goal is to use this system for preventive care and improved efficiency, in addition to the functions that are required to meet the government’s “meaningful use” criteria.

Dental providers who see enough Medicaid patients can collect a government incentive payment of $63,750 for purchasing a certified EHR system and using it in a way that meets government requirements called “meaningful use.” For oral surgeons and other providers who accept Medicare patients, $24,000 is also still available through the Medicare program.

The functionality for performing the “meaningful use” work has real-life application in the dental office by improving efficiency, increasing revenue and helping provide better health care for patients. For specific instructions on actual “meaningful use” requirements, see the following link: http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/EP-MU-TOC.pdf

To implement EHR software in their clinic, the Carrs set out by creating some goals for improved efficiency. They also have a personal mission to improve not only the oral health, but also the overall health of their patients.

The Carrs’ clinical team feels that dentistry has a tremendous opportunity to help discover various health problems and help patients avoid potential health issues that come with chronic illness. The opportunity for assessing and improving their patients’ overall health, including oral health, is critical to the Carrs.

One of the many benefits of using the DentiMax EHR system is no duplicative data entry. Mrs. Joann Carr, the office manager, shared the following additional possibilities and benefits of using the EHR software.

By integrating the system into their workflow, the Carrs reduce the time a patient spends in the chair. They are able to automate the capture of detailed patient notes and other patient information by using software templates. They have created both adult and pediatric templates, as well as hygiene templates, that they use to gather patients’ clinical information quickly and easily. With this additional EHR clinical information already entered into the software by the staff, Dr. Carr has a more complete picture as he attends to his patients.

By capturing vitals like blood pressure, they are able to screen for problems, such as hypertension, and provide valuable information to patients that can get additional care from their primary care physicians. In addition, the Carrs now have a method for ordering medical labs to check for hepatitis and other problems.

For preventive care services, they are also working on cleansings and sealants for their patients. With the EHR system, they can create lists of patients who have not yet received this care and set up reminders to bring them in for additional care. (Lists and reminders are optional “meaningful use” requirements.)

The office has been using the medication list and the problem list as well. These two areas provide several benefits. With medication history functionality, the office can check which kinds of medications a patient has received from other health-care providers. As many patients do not provide a full list of medications they are taking, or are unable to give the full list, this is a significant opportunity and advantage. This feature also provides allergy, disease and other information that can help you identify other problems the patient may not be disclosing.

Dr. Carr’s practice continues to implement new functionality with the EHR system and has already defined a few additional clinical care possibilities with this software. He has plans to implement informational handouts from the automated patient education system. These patient education handouts include information for smoking cessation and treatment for drug addiction problems.

The Carrs encourage more dentists to take advantage of EHR software. Overall, his practice is seeing opportunities for improved efficiencies using templates and increased revenue through preventive care services. And most importantly, with EHR Dr. Carr now has a more accurate picture of his patients’ overall health, which has helped improve the care he provides.

Author’s Bio

David Smith has a master’s in business administration from Westminster College and a BA from Brigham Young University. He has assisted more than 100 medical providers attain meaningful use. For the last 15 years, he has worked in the health-care information technology market. He has written dental practice management system users’ guides, and worked in operations and product management for electronic health record vendors. Reach David Smith at medtimer@gmail.com.