

Capitol Anesthesiology Association implements Physician Scheduler™ to improve the efficiency, accuracy and equity of its scheduling process

With a staff of 58 anesthesiologists working a variety of shifts and delivering services at 14 different locations, Capitol Anesthesiology Association (CAA) in Austin, Texas recognizes the need for efficient, accurate and equitable physician scheduling.

That's why this dynamic anesthesiology group with a focused growth strategy depends on Physician Scheduler,™ the industry's most comprehensive, widely used and proven automated scheduling software.

Powerful automation to accommodate complex rules, and enforce them precisely through expert automation

"I've been handling physician scheduling here since October of 2001, and the system has definitely improved our overall efficiency and accuracy in generating schedules that are fair and equitable among the physicians," says Andrew Grimes, M.D., staff anesthesiologist at CAA. "Before, it took me about 40 to 45 hours to develop a 10-week schedule on paper, and it was very tedious. Now, it takes about half the time, and the system's rules-based automation prevents errors, incompatibilities and conflicts."

At the heart of Physician Scheduler is a powerful scheduling engine that incorporates all user-specified rules and applies them automatically.

Given the complexity of many physician scheduling rules — which are often based upon and established through an intricate series of triggering relationships among assignments, call schedules and other factors — the precise, automated application of them delivers vital efficiency.

Physician Scheduler relies on a sophisticated "links-and-blocks" rules framework to ensure that all the various scheduling associations and contingencies are precisely and reliably addressed and enforced.

"The power and flexibility of the rules engine are essential to us because we have such complex rules here," states Dr. Grimes. "I haven't run across a scheduling scenario that I haven't been able to automate with the system."

The high degree of precision attained through Physician Scheduler also has enabled Dr. Grimes to devote more of his time to patient care.

“Because the process is much more efficient, it does save some M.D. hours. For instance, I used to take time out of the OR on a Monday and Tuesday to do the scheduling, and now I spend those days in the OR. Those are also dollars we’re getting back because of our use of the system.”

Comprehensive reporting capabilities guarantee schedule and call equitability

In addition to improving efficiency, Physician Scheduler equalizes physician assignments and workload, and provides reports that deliver proof of schedule and shift equitability.

“When we developed schedules on paper, we didn’t have any real handle on how well we were distributing shifts evenly among the physician staff, and no way to prove how well we were doing this,” says Dr. Grimes. “Now, through all the reports I can run, I have a complete, birds-eye view on everything that’s going on, making sure that all assignments and call, both the most desirable and the least desirable... such as weekend call... are distributed evenly.”

The consistent, accurate application of scheduling rules and the supportive reporting provide assurance that schedules are going to be fair to all staff members.

“The system has alleviated any fears that might have existed that individual needs might not be met,” Dr. Grimes emphasizes. “The system really does address individual needs, and that has enabled all of us to trust the scheduling process more.”

Helping to enhance the level of communication and individualized focus around scheduling at CAA are the personalized schedules that Dr. Grimes sends via email to each physician.

“Given the overall complexity of our schedules, with all locations and shifts we’re addressing, the physicians really appreciate receiving their own, highlighted schedule. It’s another way we’re improving awareness and preventing any missed shifts.”

The scalability and flexibility to incorporate CRNAs, and address the ongoing needs of a growing practice

CAA is expanding the scope of Physician Scheduler to schedule its staff of more than 70 certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs).

“We’re in the process of getting our CRNAs on the system, which we expect will improve scheduling efficiency even more,” Dr. Grimes reports.

Particularly valuable, he says, will be the integration of Physician Scheduler with CAA’s Kronos time-and-attendance system, which should eliminate a significant amount of redundant data entry, and provide a complete scheduling and labor management solution.

Physician Scheduler is powered by an enterprise scheduling engine. As a result, the system is the ideal fit for large hospital specialty departments that schedule both physicians and other staff members across multiple facilities.

Physician Scheduler™

Introduced in 1993, Physician Scheduler is the healthcare industry’s leading physician scheduling software. Specialty physicians across the U.S. rely on the system to automate the demanding, time-intensive process of scheduling based on their complex rules and requirements, and to ensure equitable physician call and workload.

The software automates all critical aspects of physician scheduling, from ensuring the right skill coverage at multiple locations while balancing assignments and call schedules, to consolidating, blocking and limiting specified assignments, and integrated late-breaking requests and changes.

Key features include:

- Flexible scheduling technology that adapts to all scheduling methodologies
- Robust rule integration to address the most complex scheduling requirements
- Enterprise scalability
- Continuous, real-time decision support tools
- Interactive scheduling and physician self-service over the Web
- Comprehensive reporting

About Capitol Anesthesiology Association

Capitol Anesthesiology Association, located in Austin, Texas, is a large, team-model anesthesiology practice. CAA’s physicians specialize in the field of anesthesiology, and offer additional, subspecialty expertise in the areas of obstetrics, pediatrics, intensive care, cardiovascular surgery and pain therapy.

The association delivers services at many Austin-area hospitals and ambulatory facilities, including Seton Medical Center, Seton Northwest, Brackenridge, Children’s Hospital of Austin, Bailey Square Surgical Center, Health South Surgical Hospital, and Central Park Surgery Center, among others.

About AtStaff, Inc.,

AtStaff, Inc., based in Durham, N.C., enables healthcare organizations to reduce costs, increase profitability, enhance staff recruitment and retention, and improve patient safety.

The company combines Web-based staff scheduling and staffing automation with business process improvement services to deliver proactive staff management, and establish and support best-practice methodology.

Its enterprise-wide staff scheduling, nurse scheduling and physician scheduling software systems serve more than 1,200 healthcare organizations, medical facilities, nursing departments and group practices.

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