

The University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN Improves Efficiency & Staffs Strategically with Centralized Access to Provider Information

Customer Profile: The University of Utah Health Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

University of Utah Health, the only Academic Medical Center (AMC) located in the Mountain West, currently ranks number one in quality among all AMCs in the United States. The health system serves as a prominent establishment for the training of healthcare professionals around the world, including physicians, physician assistants, nurses, and technicians. Specifically, its Obstetrics and Gynecology Department provides a broad scope of care across the specialty, with 205 providers that consist of 76 faculty, 115 adjunct faculty, and 14 APCs. Their six divisions include Family Planning, General OBGYN, Gynecological Oncology, Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM), Reproductive Endocrinology, and Urogynecology. These divisions support 31 locations throughout the region, with faculty overlap between those locations.

Challenges

The University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN had been producing, maintaining, and revising their provider schedules through manual processes that included the use of Microsoft Excel files, Google docs, ongoing email updates, and even paper files. This process proved highly inefficient, time-consuming, and ineffective for the department.

Specifically, for the MFM division, one physician tasked with developing and maintaining the schedule spent upwards of 20 plus hours each month on the division's clinical and call schedules, not to mention additional hours spent on the in-house call schedule for all divisions, while also trying to maintain swaps and equitability. This process was unsustainable in the long run.

Not only were the manual entry, editing, and communication efforts problematic, but so was a lack of centralized visibility. When changes were made to the schedule, there was no way to efficiently and instantly notify providers to ensure they were aware of them, leading to numerous departmental problems.

This inaccurate or limited visibility into provider activity led to disjointed provider workflows, delayed or incorrect communications between staff, increased potential for mistakes, a negative impact on overall patient care, and the inability to proactively adjust coverage. It also made reporting near impossible.

The lack of real-time, up-to-date schedules with centralized visibility and a **single source of truth** made the University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN realize a change was desperately needed to mitigate the challenges they were facing.

“Without accurate schedule visibility, we can have discrepancies, such as not knowing which clinic tasks were actually worked, start and stop times of clinics not matching, or not being able to track non-clinical tasks like sick, vacation, or FMLA,” Melissa Barker, Project Administrator, said. “There was a disconnect between provider scheduling data and what was reflected in Epic and our other systems. So, some months, during our audit, we’d discover upwards of 250 discrepancies because we didn’t have an up-to-date provider scheduling platform.”

The Solution

Initially, The University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN approached QGenda with the desire to incorporate digital provider scheduling within their MFM division. They had two primary goals in mind in implementing digital provider scheduling:

- Save time and streamline clinic and call scheduling
- Accurately track and report provider activity

Regarding becoming more efficient with scheduling processes, the department was looking to automate and digitize provider schedules, enabling schedules to be developed three to twelve months in advance, depending on division. “Initially, our main goal was to save time streamlining the cumbersome process for our MFM team to write their monthly clinical schedule along with the call scheduling process,” said Barker.

For tracking and reporting purposes, the department needed visibility to monitor various time away, performance to academic missions, and provider activity in real-time. “We need to understand where our providers are working, when they’re working, and what assignment they’re working, not just Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm when they are in clinic, but also which providers are assigned call on evenings and weekends, so that we can correctly report back to the department, institution, and state,” she continued.

While the department originally planned to utilize the scheduling solution within the MFM division, their largest, they quickly determined that it made sense to implement across the board for the other five. The department implemented **QGenda Advanced Scheduling**, which provided a **centralized, single source of truth for all provider activity**, including clinical sessions, administrative time, research time, education commitments, time away, OR sessions, and professional development.

Furthermore, QGenda was able to configure the platform to fit each division's unique needs. Some divisions needed more functionality, while others only needed a way to consolidate their provider scheduling into one place. Nonetheless, each of the division's special requirements were adequately met through Advanced Scheduling's versatility.

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To account for each of our division's unique needs, we needed a platform that was able to be customized on a division level, while still providing the department as a whole with all the standard information that it needs.

Because of this, we chose QGenda as our provider scheduling platform, because it can be whatever you need it to be for what you want to accomplish.

- Melissa Barker, Project Administrator

With the implementation of QGenda Advanced Scheduling to serve as the single source of truth for provider schedules, the University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN achieved:

- Centralized visibility into accurate, up-to-date schedules
- Shared and configurable administrative access
- Ability to view and manage on-the-go
- Schedule creation based on automation and work patterns
- Streamlined schedule communication
- Ability to track provider work statistics in real-time
- Proactive requesting potential by providers

Results

As a result of the implementation of QGenda Advanced Scheduling, the department has been able to:

1. Improve efficiency
2. Staff strategically
3. Adapt to change

Improve Efficiency

Through digital scheduling and a combination of automation and work patterns, the department significantly reduced the time to create, manage, and access schedules, while also succeeding in creating schedules three to twelve months in advance. Manual entry was reduced, and the newfound centralized visibility and transparency enabled the department to streamline other workflow processes. Configurable rules also improved schedule equitability for providers.

“Because all provider scheduling data is in one, centralized location, we are able to track stats in real-time to proactively ensure that call scheduling is staying evenly distributed between participating providers. This is important for transparency and managing work-life balance,” the project administrator shared. “Additionally, the ability to set up custom lists has reduced the amount of time to cross-check schedules in Spok, so we have gone from a couple of errors a month to no errors since establishing a defined workflow.”

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Ultimately, we can now use our provider scheduling data to inform and streamline additional workflows, such as physician compensation, scheduling support staff, addressing productivity, and more.

- Melissa Barker, Project Administrator

Staff Strategically

QGenda Advanced Scheduling has enabled the department to staff strategically and ensure adequate coverage. The ability to streamline the picking up and rescheduling of clinic sessions, simplify mid-level assignment processes, and easily share information with partner institutions allows the department to proactively plan coverage further ahead and improve patient access.

Adapt to Change

The ability to adapt to change has never been more important than in the era of the coronavirus pandemic and the inundation of patient surges, provider shortages, and reallocation of exam rooms. Using QGenda, the department was able to track clinics cancelled due to COVID-19 and report that information back to the university when needed for financial analysis. They were also able to create new COVID-related tasks, such as COVID back-up call, in case a provider was suddenly exposed and unavailable. Finally, they could use the platform to track COVID-19 leave, a designation separate from the traditional sick or vacation times allotted to providers.

Future Outlook

Through using QGenda Advanced Scheduling for the past five years, the department learned that **access to accurate, real-time scheduling data isn't just important; it is critical.** "Having accurate scheduling data is the essential first step in being able to make informed decisions from staffing and space utilization to compensation and reporting requirements," explained Barker.

As of February 2021, the department is currently implementing **QGenda Time Tracking** and **QGenda Insights**, syncing the scheduling data with these platforms in order to assist the department in evaluating one piece of the puzzle as they update their physician compensation model. "QGenda provides the full picture of utilizations. For example, are providers really only seeing patients 9:00 am to noon, as opposed to using their full 8:00 am to noon session to its fullest? Could they see an additional four patients in that earlier hour? **This opens up the bigger conversation on productivity,**" hinted Barker.

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“QGenda gives us that 30,000 foot view as to how providers are using their clinical time and how we can provide assistance to help them use it more effectively.”

- Melissa Barker, Project Administrator

As the department continues their journey with QGenda, they plan to use the provider scheduling data to make strategic decisions and grow more proactive about coverage and staffing plans, rather than reactive. We plan to use QGenda Insights as one of our analytics tools to pinpoint opportunities to optimize our resources most effectively - maybe even rooms in the future.”

Conclusion

With QGenda Advanced Scheduling, the University of Utah Health Department of OBGYN successfully created a single source of truth for provider schedules. With centralized, real-time visibility, they now operate more efficiently, staff more strategically, and adapt to change more effectively. While the scheduling platform has resulted in many benefits, they're not finished yet.

The provider scheduling data continues to inform a variety of workflows, most currently the addition of QGenda Time Tracking and QGenda Insights, enabling the department to do things like accurately report provider activity, adjust physician compensation models, and even improve utilization and productivity.

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It is so much bigger than scheduling. The data and stats you can pull out of it... the depth of what is there and the potential to use that data to do things like improve productivity, increase utilization, and make the most of your time and resources is huge.

- Melissa Barker, Project Administrator

Ultimately, as the scheduling data becomes more interconnected into other institutional systems and workflows, the provider scheduling solution will further benefit the well-being of patients, providers, and the organization as a whole.

ABOUT QGenda

QGenda is the leading innovator in enterprise healthcare workforce management solutions, delivering solutions for provider scheduling, on-call scheduling, room management, time tracking, compensation management and workforce analytics. QGenda serves more than 3,500 organizations in over 45 medical specialties. Leading physician groups, hospitals, academic medical centers, and enterprise health systems use QGenda to advance provider scheduling, optimize capacity, and improve access to care. QGenda is headquartered in Atlanta, GA with offices in Baltimore, MD, and Burlington, VT.

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