



Case Study: Northern Plains Laboratory, LLC Cortex Medical Billing

The Client— Northern Plains Laboratory, LLC (NPL) based in Bismarck, ND is a full-service clinical laboratory that provides comprehensive outreach services to regional healthcare providers. State of the art robotics and automation have helped NPL achieve its ranking as one of the top clinical laboratories in the upper Midwest.

The lab also provides billing and coding consultations, laboratory directorship and technical supervisor functions (per CLIA regulations), and enhanced test offerings in their relationships with nationally recognized laboratories that specialize in esoteric laboratory testing.

Extensive Pathology Services - In partnership with Pathology Consultants, PC (Path PC), NPL offers comprehensive, full-service anatomic pathology services including surgical pathology, cytopathology and non-forensic autopsy service.

Responding to changing needs— NPL began the huge undertaking of creating specifications to build a Windows-based accounts receivable system in the late 1990s. One goal of the project was to customize the package to allow for interfacing with the LIS packages and NPL's outreach lab order entry system to a billing system. During this process, NPL researched the Cortex Medical Billing System only to discover that the **Cortex package already had many of the features** NPL was seeking. NPL dismissed the idea of writing their own

system, and purchased the Cortex Medical Billing System instead.

Since then, Cortex Medical Billing has become the billing and accounts receivable cornerstone for all of Northern Plains Laboratory clinical and anatomical labs. The firm currently runs three companies on the Cortex system; a reference lab company, an anatomic surgical/gynecology lab, and they serve as a billing service for another client.

The software decision— One of the features that led NPL to pursue Cortex's product was their Microsoft **SQL data base platform**. This open database platform allowed the lab to create numerous ad-hoc reports by incorporating the open data base connectivity (ODBC), while using various Microsoft and Crystal reporting tools. Since Cortex delivers the source code for all 130+ Crystal Reports, it **allowed the staff to make modifications to standard reports for more specific needs**.

The goal— NPL envisioned being able "to answer the next question". Purchasing the Cortex Medical Billing package allowed NPL to focus their resources on developing the interfaces for their outreach order entry system and LIS systems.

Client focused solutions— According to NPL's Information Specialist, Paul Nelson, "The Cortex development team has done a tremendous job in working with us to develop the interfaces we

wanted. These interfaces allow our systems to import both demographic and charge/service transactions into Cortex Medical Billing (client and patient transactions), reducing manual data entry to almost nil."

Electronic orders—With their new outreach order entry software, NPL can now capture more than 95 percent of their orders electronically. These electronic orders, complete with insurance, billing, order and diagnostic information, are transmitted to the lab's data systems. Once a result is received from the testing lab LIS, a charge transaction is triggered for interfacing to the Cortex system. These transactions can be a client or patient transaction complete with demographic and ICD-9 codes.

Maximum efficiency— The interface developed with the Cortex development team for charge transactions into Cortex has reduced manual data entry performed by NPL staff by nearly 90 percent. An electronic charge transaction to the Cortex system is created within two days of finalizing results -- **a process that has significantly decreased NPL's days in AR.** A claims "cleaner" program in the Cortex system checks for missing data and errors before the claims is sent, thus reducing errors and days spent in accounts receivable. NPL processes approximately 62,000 service charge

lines per month with four billing employees. The lab applies almost 25,000 payment and adjustment transactions per month with just one and a half employees.

Statistics and cost reporting—

At the end of every month, NPL extracts data from the Cortex accounts receivable system and "de-normalizes" the data, allowing their system to perform a wide range of statistics and cost production reporting.

Nelson states, ***"We could not have achieved this without the SQL data base platform and structure found with the Cortex system.*** To summarize our transaction flow, our outreach clients are registering their patient's insurance, charge information and demographic data in the form of an interface to our lab LIS systems as well as the Cortex A/R system. With these interfaces in place, we have been able to create a very efficient lab billing system."

For more information on how Cortex Medical Billing can help your business maximize efficiency, go to www.cortexmed.com



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