



How an Invasive Procedure Was Avoided Through the Use of a Health Information Exchange System

A Patient Story

When Emily was five years old, her family moved 40 minutes away from their hometown and the office of Dr. Allen Ausford, their family physician. Shortly after the move, Emily started having chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs), so her mother opted to take her to a nearby walk-in clinic, where, each time, the physician on staff would order a urinalysis and urine culture. Emily's urinalysis results always came back showing the presence of white blood cells, indicating an infection, and it prompted the prescription of repeated courses of antibiotics.

After Emily's third visit to the walk-in clinic, the physician on staff advised Emily's mother to take her to see Dr. Ausford. Three failed courses of antibiotics gave the on-staff physician reason to believe that Dr. Ausford might choose to refer Emily to a urologist for a cystoscopy—an invasive procedure which would require Emily to be put under anesthesia—to investigate possible anatomical causes of her recurrent UTIs.

When Emily and her mother arrived in Dr. Ausford's office, he logged into the Orion Health Clinical Portal, pulled up Emily's medical record, reviewed her lab results, and immediately identified some key information that shed light on her case.

The physicians that had been treating Emily for UTIs had based their diagnosis on the presence of white blood cells in her urinalysis, but they had failed to follow up on the results of her urine culture, which can take three to four days to process. In all three cases, the urine cultures were negative for bacterial growth, which would not have been the case if Emily had had a genuine UTI. Dr. Ausford suspected that something else was going on.

After an additional work up, it turned out that Emily's symptoms were not due to recurrent UTIs, but rather to an easily treatable lactose intolerance. Had it not been for Dr. Ausford's insight into her aggregated test results, he would have accepted the diagnosis of recurrent UTIs from the walk-in physicians and referred Emily for a cystoscopy. Instead, Dr. Ausford was able to see the big picture, make a better diagnosis, and treat his patient with a simple change in diet.

"The beauty of the tool," said Dr. Ausford, "is that, normally, without that information, which took seconds to find, I would have accepted what Emily's mother told me at face value and referred Emily to a urologist. Months later, Emily would have had an unnecessary procedure that would not have solved her problem. This would have tied up the pediatric urologist with an unnecessary consultation, as well, depriving another child timely access to a truly needed consult."

Providing physicians with the information they need to prevent unnecessary testing for a little girl—and improve referral capacity for appropriate patients—is just another way Orion Health is revolutionizing healthcare, one patient at a time.

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