

Navigating the launch of my private practice—with the right help

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This column is part of a series of firsthand physician accounts that detail how AMA medical group partners are moving medicine to support patient health and the medical profession.

As doctors, we're no stranger to complex decision-making. Weighing a medication's benefits and side effects, adhering to evidence-based guidelines while respecting our intuition and honoring our relationship with patients. Yet one of the most important questions I have faced in my career as a pediatric neurologist did not arise in the exam room.

The question was this: Do I want to leave my hospital system and become a physician with an independent practice?

My answer was a resounding yes. In fact, navigating difficult decisions was one of the main reasons why I wanted to establish my own practice. Practice ownership meant more autonomy, more independence, more control over my destiny as a physician to change health care and help my patients.

This monumental decision was followed by another, equally perplexing question: How? The difficulty of navigating that journey is one reason why employed physicians now outnumber physicians in private practice, according to the AMA's own research.

Then I had a major realization: Just because I wanted to become a private practice physician didn't mean I had to do it alone. Furthermore, getting outside help enabled me to smoothly get my practice up and running faster so that I could begin generating revenue, building my patient base, and creating the patient-focused culture I'd dreamed of.

To do this right, I needed tools and technology, but also the human element to offer insights and cheer me on throughout this massive undertaking. I wanted an organization that respected my autonomy while sharing tips I might miss on my own.

All of these considerations informed my decision to partner with Privia Health. As a physician-focused organization, they were able to deliver the expertise and support as we worked together to make my dream of private practice a reality.

Easing into my EHR

To pick just one example to highlight the value of my practice's partnership with Privia Health, I'd go with choosing an EHR. With so many options, it was hard to pick the "right" one. I knew I wanted an EHR with dictation capabilities to allow me to focus more on the patient encounter and spend less time on after-hours administrative work.

As a specialist in a new area, I also wanted a robust referral-management system to connect me with leading local physicians. Then there's the issue of implementing this EHR, training to learn best practices, and integrating it into my workflow.

Privia Health paired me with a practice consultant who, every day, helped guide me through the complexity of adopting and transitioning to a new EHR. They were able to answer questions or, when they weren't sure, direct me to the right person with the answer. Ask anyone who has undergone an EHR migration and they'll tell you how intense and confusing it is. Having someone there to reassure me throughout the process, offering advice and encouragement, was invaluable.

In working together on business structuring, IT, compliance and much more, I noticed a paradox. Support from a partnership allowed me to actualize the vision of autonomy that led me to start a private practice. By not doing this on my own, I had more independence to focus on what mattered most to me—delivering the highest-quality neurological care to my patients in the way that I want to.

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