

**Steve Morris, MD**  
Managing Director  
AtlantaGastro

ATLANTAGASTRO

## AtlantaGastro streamlines scheduling to improve patient care

“Our top priorities are to be available for patients when they need us, and to empower our people to take care of the patient’s needs,” says Jana Baker, practice administrator at Atlanta Gastroenterology Associates.

Those fundamentals of caregiving are a formidable challenge for AtlantaGastro, given that in 2017 the group’s 150 providers had more than 370,000 patient encounters at 68 North Georgia locations.

The complexities begin even before patients see a clinician, when they call or go online to schedule appointments. “Our call-center schedulers need information about each provider, what patients they see, which special procedures they perform, and their scheduling preferences,” says Baker. AtlantaGastro’s physicians and advanced practice providers want a scheduling process that carries patients smoothly from evaluation through treatment.

### **AtlantaGastro’s professionals sought a scheduling solution that would better serve patients**

Providers and staff set out to improve several aspects of patient scheduling. The practice’s many locations wanted to move forward from their calendar-based system, which required schedulers to flip through pages to fill scattered open slots with patients who needed to be seen on short notice.

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The practice also sought to improve the accuracy of scheduling by always matching patients with a provider who had the correct expertise to perform the required evaluation and any needed procedures.

AtlantaGastro’s providers and schedulers quickly saw positive results when the practice transitioned to a scheduling system better able to meet patient needs. “DASH is really different,” says Steve Morris, MD, managing director of AtlantaGastro. “It’s a very smart, intuitive system—and you can build functionality into it.”

Now schedulers’ screens can offer a clean view of relevant appointment times at locations close to the patient. “Previously it was difficult to find an open spot here or there,” Baker says. “Our schedule is closer to capacity now.” Capacity utilization has increased 2.7%, and AtlantaGastro’s providers have been able to spend more time with patients. Dr. Morris is pleased with the practice’s improved schedule optimization, because he puts a premium on avoiding delays in care.

“Patients will get the appointment they want, not wait a month.”



“If someone is sick and wants to be seen, then we will see them today or tomorrow,” says Baker. “We wouldn’t have been able to this before.”

**Jana Baker**  
Practice Administrator  
Atlanta Gastro

#### Better service for patients and six-figure savings on labor

AtlantaGastro has cut average call-handle time by nearly 30 seconds, to 4 minutes and 30 seconds. The practice handles nearly 3,000 calls a day, yielding a savings of almost 25 hours of labor per day. “We’ve reduced our payroll costs by three full-time employees,” says Baker.

The streamlined interface makes the scheduling system much easier to learn, says Baker. “We’ve reduced training time for schedulers from two months to two weeks.”

An intelligent waiting list also better serves patients and providers, Baker notes. Patients can specify, for example, an afternoon appointment at a particular location. When an opening arises, the patient will immediately receive a text offering it.

#### AtlantaGastro’s patient self-scheduling is off to a strong start

AtlantaGastro has opened a new digital front door by phasing in patient self-scheduling. “It’s the next big thing,” says Dr. Morris. “Millennials are used to doing everything online. We launched self-scheduling for colonoscopy just six months ago, and it’s already maybe 10 percent of our scheduling volume for that procedure.”

In Dr. Morris’s view, meeting patients’ needs on their own terms is key to a more successful practice. “Doctors don’t know how much business they’re leaving on the table with inefficient scheduling,” he says.

### How call handle-time savings translate to labor savings



30 seconds/call



25 hours/day



3 FTEs

**\$125,000 Savings**

## Q&A

### What are your new scheduling solution’s most valuable benefits?

- Patients get seen more quickly
- Providers’ detailed scheduling preferences are embedded
- Processes like patient reminders are automated

“Dash is a huge benefit to running an efficient healthcare care center. The ability to configure it with our doctors’ scheduling preferences has enabled us to meet patient needs, improve care, and run an efficient operation.”

**Jana Baker**  
Practice Administrator  
AtlantaGastro