



A Guide to Hybrid EMR:

The Natural Approach to Electronic Medical Records

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Introduction

Practicing medicine is complex enough without software making things more difficult. Hybrid EMR offers a natural, intuitive way to manage the flow of your practice. It's simple, easy-to-use technology that keeps your focus right where it belongs: on your patients, not your paperwork.

As any practice manager can tell you, when a patient's paper chart is incomplete, misfiled or lost, the resulting delays are expensive, time consuming and frustrating. And the problem isn't confined to hospitals or large healthcare institutions: Even a solo practice can quickly become overwhelmed by the amount of paper and hard work required to store patient records and comply with industry rules and regulations.

Medical practices that store patients' medical records in a computerized, electronic format decrease the costs associated with storing and handling paper records, ensure the safety and accessibility of those records, and increase the efficiency of their own operations and employees.

Disasters such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina have even spurred the federal government to become involved: One of the major long-term goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is to "initiate a process to computerize health records to reduce medical errors and save on health care costs." Federal stimulus money is on offer to healthcare providers who make meaningful use of certified technology to achieve this goal.

But despite these benefits and financial incentives, the adoption of traditional electronic medical records (EMR) systems remains low. Smaller practices in particular have tended to avoid the technology for two main reasons: the high cost of implementation and the failure of traditional systems to meet smaller practices' needs. The marketplace is full of EMR vendors offering expensive solutions, but few physicians have the technical expertise to select a system that will accelerate their clinical and business processes rather than slowing them down.

For many, Hybrid EMR is a natural approach to electronic medical records that alleviates these concerns.

Built on a comprehensive content management solution, Hybrid EMR offers a more modular, incremental and affordable approach to EMR—one that respects the way doctors work and streamlines operations across multiple departments. Hybrid solutions provide a central and secure way to manage all of your practice's content—including patient charts and records, EOBs, invoices, contracts, legal documents and more—without burdening physicians and staff with complicated and time-consuming new ways of working with patients.

Why Traditional EMR Fails

“I thought I was paying for a Ferrari [of EMR systems], but what I got was a bag of parts. To see \$100,000 just disappear.... That’s a tremendous amount of money to me. Had I been a new doctor coming out of a residency program or just out of medical school, I’d have gone bankrupt.”

Barry D. Hendrix, M.D.
Arkansas Family Physician

No matter how large the financial incentive, no practice manager wants to deploy complex technology that will do more harm than good. This is evidenced by the fact that a recent survey published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found that just 13% of 2,758 physicians surveyed had a basic EMR system in place, and a mere four percent said they had a fully functioning EMR.

Even more disturbing, of the practices that have tried to implement traditional EMR, many of them have failed. **Industry estimates of the de-installation rates of traditional EMR systems range from 20% up to 78%.** Mark R. Anderson, CEO of the A.C. Group, a Texas-based healthcare advisory and research firm, explained, “It’s because so many practices are going from basic level one practice management software packages to level 10 EMR packages.”

In other words, they try to run before they can crawl.

“There is no doubt that if you do it right, EMR can improve your revenue source and, as a long term goal, it seems very credible,” said Mark Frisse, MD, Accenture Professor of Biomedical Informatics at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. The problems come when the technology is too complex for users to learn and apply to existing business and clinical procedures.

The more closely a software solution mirrors the day-to-day realities of a practice’s working methods, the more likely it is to deliver value. The more changes a solution requires to the way users work, the more likely it is to end up collecting dust on a shelf.

Typically, traditional EMRs not only require serious changes to the way physicians work, but also a significant upfront investment and heavy-duty customization as well.

Doctors as Expensive Scribes

One common complaint about traditional EMR systems is that doctors have to type their notes into the system either during or after appointments, spending more time interacting with their computers than with their patients. “Doctors don’t typically like EMR systems because they require major changes in clinical workflow,” said John Stamm, office IT manager for the Children’s Respiratory and Critical Care Specialists in Minneapolis, MN.

Those changes are not the result of simply keying in information that used to be handwritten, either. Many traditional EMRs force doctors to deal with intrusive pull down menus, check boxes and multiple screens, breaking up their preferred clinical workflow and disrupting patient care.

In fact, a 2006 study on the effects of traditional EMR on physician/patient communication suggests that using computers in the exam room negatively affects patient care by inhibiting eye contact, decreasing dialogue and reducing emotional responsiveness. The study concludes that “visual attentiveness to the monitor rather than eye contact with the patient may inhibit sensitive or full patient disclosure.”

To avoid the negative consequences of using a computer in the exam room, many physicians find themselves taking notes the way they always have—on paper—and later typing them into the system.

But compelling doctors to spend even two extra minutes at the end of every appointment entering data into the system will do one of two things:

- Decrease their patient load, diminishing practice profitability.
- Eat into existing appointment time and reduce customer satisfaction.

Hiring additional staff to do the data entry is one way that some practices have attempted to sidestep this dilemma, but increasing headcount in service of new technology is not cost-effective or efficient.

“Clearly, things like usability impact users every day. When you are using an application 30–40 times per day, wasting 30 seconds per patient...means you may see two fewer patients that day or stay that much longer in the clinic.”

Dr. Karim Keshavjee
EMR Consultant; Ontario Family Physician

High Cost, Uncertain Return

For many smaller practices, the total cost of implementing a traditional EMR system can be prohibitive. Software costs, hardware costs, site preparation, installation services, application development, configuration management, data conversion, user training, maintenance and support services, quality assurance and post-implementation reviews: these are just a few of the costs practices need to consider when selecting an EMR solution—and many of them are not reflected in the price quotes vendors provide.

According to a 2008 survey by the Texas Medical Association, the median reported implementation cost of EMR per physician was \$25,000, with median monthly maintenance fees of \$425 per physician. For a single-partner practice, that's an upfront investment of \$50,000, with an additional \$10,200 a year in system maintenance fees alone.

At smaller practices that don't have retained earnings, that money comes directly out of doctors' paychecks. And according to a recent AMA study, physicians receive only 11 cents for every dollar saved through the use of EMR, with the rest of the savings accruing to insurers. ARRA funding will provide incentives of \$44,000 to \$69,000 spread out over a five-year period; for most practices, this won't even defray the cost of maintaining a traditional EMR during that five-year span.

Many practices are also wary of implementing a traditional EMR solution because there is a real danger that today's system will be obsolete tomorrow. With nearly 400 vendors in the market, it is difficult to know which players will stand the test of time.

Even the government is unclear about what exactly will constitute a "qualified" EMR system in the years to come: "The government will start with certain functionalities in 2011, add more in 2013, and more in 2015," said Brad Tritle, Executive Director of Arizona Health-e Connection, an industry-sponsored non-profit organization working to promote EMR in that state.

Implementing one expensive system today only to have to replace it two or three years down the road is not an attractive option for most practices. Nor have interoperable standards for information exchange yet been established, meaning that patient data could easily become "trapped" in an outdated system, adding even more work and expense if a practice doesn't choose its system wisely the first time around.

Cost Comparison: Traditional vs. Hybrid EMR

	Traditional EMR	Hybrid EMR
Average Implementation Cost*	\$25,000 per physician	\$4,250 per physician
Average Monthly Maintenance Cost	\$425 per physician	\$50 per physician

**Implementation cost includes software and professional services. Cost based on a physician practice with two physicians. Costs associated with traditional EMR taken from Texas Medical Association Special Survey on Electronic Medical Records, May 2008.*

The Customization Quandary

Technology should help your practice “break through” to greater productivity and profitability. It shouldn’t break the bank.

Product demonstrations make deploying and using traditional EMR seem incredibly simple, but despite some vendors’ claims, EMR systems are typically not plug and play. Vendors provide rudimentary clinical content, but extensive customization is often required to meet the needs of an individual practice. If the practice hasn’t anticipated the need to modify the system, it can find itself out of time, out of budget and out of luck.

“We had everything we needed to go live with our EMR,” said Michelle Rusk, office administrator at the Plano Children’s Medical Clinic in Plano, TX. “Some of the software applications applied well to our practice, some didn’t. Now we have all the equipment that we bought for the system, but it’s not being used.”

In addition, it’s important to note that different specialties have dramatically different information applications and needs. For example, a system designed with cardiologists in mind may not include pediatric growth charts or prenatal care templates. Or a system designed for internal medicine may supply way more functionality than a surgery center, which sees patients an average of only two or three times, desires.

Too often, tailoring a traditional EMR system to the needs of a particular practice means hiring expensive programmers to build customized plug-ins from scratch.

There's a More Natural Way: Hybrid EMR

With Hybrid EMR, doctors are not forced to become expensive scribes, spending their time with computers instead of patients. Instead of clicking through multiple screens, check boxes and pull-down menus during patient exams, they simply scan their handwritten notes into the system at the end of the appointment or the end of the day.

Although traditional EMR systems—coupled with that elusive national medical records database—have the potential to revolutionize the way doctors practice medicine, we're not there yet. Traditional EMR, as it currently exists, has a number of serious drawbacks preventing widespread adoption, including prohibitive costs, overly involved requirements for customization, and painful changes to the clinical workflow.

Hybrid EMR solves these challenges.

Hybrid solutions offer a more natural approach to EMR, one that's embraced by doctors, practice managers and front- and back-office staff alike. It's a modular, incremental approach that combines best-of-class content management with other applications such as practice management and e-prescribe.

Hybrid EMR is cost-effective and easy to install, administer and use. Best of all, it centralizes and stores electronic medical records—and other essential, non-medical content—without forcing major changes to the clinical workflow.

Advantages of Taking an Incremental Approach

Taking an incremental approach to EMR has a number of benefits, most notably:

- **It's natural.** Hybrid EMR fits into the natural flow of physicians' workdays. It allows the practice to receive the benefits of electronic charting without causing staff to adopt aggravating and time-consuming new processes or damaging the quality of patient care. "An EMR is so complicated," said Stacie Sturges, practice manager for Brian Hanson, MD. "Laserfiche is just what we need to manage our office and improve patient care."
- **It's affordable.** Implementing a hybrid solution does not require the same kind of serious, upfront investment that a traditional EMR demands. Quality content management solutions are available for as little as \$500 per user and can easily be integrated with existing practice management applications. Add-ons such as e-prescribe may be incorporated at any time, giving the practice the time and flexibility to invest in the solution in a timeframe that makes financial sense.

- **It's always current and won't become obsolete.** Practices that standardize on hybrid solutions do not have to gamble on implementing a system that will soon become obsolete. As the government definition of “qualified EMR” evolves, hybrid solutions—built on an open architecture—can evolve right along with it. Tritle believes that the government’s slowly-expanding definition of acceptable EMR “actually encourage[s] a modular approach... I think an open architecture approach to clinical software would be fabulous. It would allow people to choose the best components of various systems, and build the system they need.”
- **It's easy to deploy.** Deployed through standard installation packages and configured using intuitive Web-based interfaces, best-in-class hybrid solutions are designed for rapid deployment. According to Marsha Hunter, medical records director at Iredell Memorial Hospital, “At the end of just two weeks... we had a fully functional system. Getting this kind of technology solution in place normally takes months.” Training users is equally fast. Todd Blum, CEO for Ear, Nose, and Throat Associates of South Florida, said that Hybrid EMR has allowed his practice to go paperless “without physicians being forced to be expensive scribes. Fifteen minutes of training and they're up and running.”
- **It's gradual.** Hybrid systems are much easier to master than traditional EMR, and they allow the practice to gradually move from “level one” practice management software to an increasingly more sophisticated system. The simplicity of the system—and the gradual progression—encourages user acceptance. Bonnie Kelly, IS supervisor at the Fertility Centers of Illinois, said, “When we switched from paper EOBs to Laserfiche, the patient account representatives were working with it like veterans by the end of the first day. Over the next several weeks, we saw so much improvement and so few problems that we felt confident we could move on to patient charts.”
- **It gives doctors control over their own processes.** According to recent research conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit on behalf of Laserfiche, 80% of the organizations that have implemented formal initiatives to improve business processes over the past three years have faced significant employee resistance. Three major causes of this reluctance to change were:
 - The new process added more work (31%).
 - Employees had little or no say in determining the new process (31%).
 - The new process didn't map to the way employees thought their jobs should be done (28%).

By granting doctors and other office staff more flexibility around the way in which they achieve EMR, hybrid solutions enable medical practices to neutralize these objections to change. Doctors do not have to mess around with multiple screens, check boxes and pull-down menus during patient exams; instead, they simply scan their handwritten notes into the system at the end of the appointment or the end of the day. The practice creates organization-wide templates and standards for managing content, and individual physicians maintain control over how they interact with patients and input their clinical notes.

Advantages of Building on a Content Management Platform

There are two major drivers for building a hybrid solution on a content management platform:

- **It enables back scanning.** Traditional EMRs typically convert patient files into an electronic format on a day-forward basis, leaving many practices in the unenviable position of having to flip back and forth between new digital files and old paper ones. Doctors still have to consult paper charts even after the new EMR system is in place, undermining their perception of the usefulness of the expensive new technology and decreasing the likelihood that they will use it.

Hybrid EMR allows practices to scan existing medical records into the system and index them by specific identifiers such as patient name, social security number, illness or age first, before the day-forward data entry begins. This helps physicians become accustomed to paperless methods by showing them how much easier it is to retrieve patient information than ever before, and serves as a reliable precursor to day-forward digitizing.

- **It works for the entire organization—not just patient charts.** By definition, traditional EMR systems are focused exclusively on patient records. In contrast, Hybrid EMR built on a content management platform provides benefits across the entire organization, creating efficiencies and streamlining processes in departments such as:
 - **Accounting:** Simplify the payment cycle by automatically routing requisitions and linking documents that must be matched or reviewed for payment, such as purchase orders, bills of lading and invoices.
 - **Admissions:** Scan and store admissions content such as insurance cards, signed privacy notice acknowledgements and identification cards, and link the scanned content to patients' electronic medical records.
 - **Back Office:** Automatically route documents—with e-mail notifications and time-out alerts—through verification, coding and claim-preparation processes.
 - **Billing:** Retrieve encounter forms, charts, EOB forms, checks and correspondence directly from your billing application.
 - **Credentialing:** Streamline the credentialing process by scanning and organizing payer applications, diplomas, licenses, CVs and CMEs.
 - **Human Resources:** Digitize paperwork in employees' personnel files, automatically route new documents to the appropriate HR staff member and provide employees with secure, Web access to information in their HR records.
 - **Legal:** Manage partnership and joint venture agreements, case files, business and employment contracts, compliance records and correspondence.

Selecting a system with comprehensive security features and a configurable repository structure allows practices to protect patient records while improving information access for authorized users organization-wide.

Hybrid EMR vs. Traditional EMR: A Comparison

<u>Capabilities</u>	Traditional EMR	Hybrid EMR
Improve chart accessibility.	✓	✓
Increase record security	✓	✓
Decrease the cost of handling and storing paper records.	✓	✓
Offer preliminary diagnostics.	✓	
Offer advanced diagnostics like lab tests, CAT scans, MRIs and stress tests.	✓	
Offer e-prescribe functionality.	✓	✓ (with integration)
Offer practice management functionality.	✓	✓ (with integration)
Manage patient records.	✓	✓
Scan doctors' handwritten notes into patient records.		✓
Link scanned patient documentation to electronic medical records.		✓
Automatically route information.		✓
Offer audit trail tracking for HIPAA compliance.		✓
Retrieve encounter forms, charts, EOB forms, checks and correspondence directly from billing applications.		✓
Automatically route documents—with e-mail notifications and time-out alerts—through verification, coding and claim-preparation processes.		✓
Scan and organize paper applications, diplomas, licenses, CVs and CMEs.		✓
Digitize paperwork in employees' personnel files and provide employees with secure access to their HR records.		✓
Manage partnership and joint venture agreements, case files, contracts, compliance records and correspondence.		✓

Results of Going Hybrid

Practices that implement Hybrid EMR reap many of the benefits of traditional EMR systems, without the associated risk, expense and disruption. These benefits include:

- **Improved chart accessibility.** Records are scanned and automatically indexed, making them easily searchable by multiple identifiers. Better access to information improves the quality of patient care by reducing gaps in communication between providers and decreasing duplicate testing. In addition, multiple users within the practice can access records simultaneously from any location. Jeffrey Johnson, systems information specialist at SurgiCenter of Baltimore, said, “We used to have constant friction among departments that needed the same record or were looking for missing records, but with Laserfiche, everyone who needs a chart can always find it. It has dramatically improved the working relationship between departments.”
- **Increased record security.** Stringent privacy laws dictate that practices protect patient information. Hybrid solutions store records in a secure repository that limits access by user, folder, document and/or data field. Jerry Carnley, CIO of Spindletop Mental Health and Mental Retardation Center, said, “We no longer have lengthy processes to obtain or store records—employees have instant access to records through our password-protected intranet site. Employees only have access to the patient records they manage. Other confidential client, employee and financial records are not accessible outside the department.”
- **Cost savings.** By decreasing their reliance on paper, practices realize significant cost savings. According to Iredell’s Hunter, “In healthcare, real estate is probably the most expensive thing we have. So if I can free up office space, I’m thrilled.” In addition to the efficiencies acquired by eliminating filing rooms and cabinets from the office, practices experience savings by reducing the need for:
 - Off-site record storage.
 - Medical records transportation.
 - Paper and photocopying.
 - Transcription.
- **Enhanced productivity.** “Around thirty percent of the time, we’d need a document that was misfiled or ‘temporarily lost,’” said Marico Oliveira, former director of operations and current director of human resources at Central Oregon Radiology Associates. “Searches for these documents could take anywhere from five minutes to three days.” Instant search and retrieval eliminates wasted staff time spent looking for missing documents. In addition, workflow functionality automates collaborative business processes, eliminating redundancy by reducing the need for manual data entry and automatically routing documents to the appropriate staff for review.
- **Effortless disaster recovery.** Digital archiving simplifies disaster recovery and business continuity planning by allowing backups of entire records repositories to be stored on durable, compact CDs, DVDs or other media. According to Bill Long, CEO of Multi-Med, a medical billing company that survived an arsonist’s attempt to burn down its office building, “Even if the building had been completely leveled, all of our information would have been backed up, right to the minute of the event. We could have been back up and running within a day, two at the most.”

How to Get Started

Medical practices that are ready to reap the benefits of electronic records without the headaches associated with traditional EMR are turning to best-of-breed hybrid solutions. But to get the most out of their investment, practice managers should have a clear, planned vision for how the solution will fit into their overall strategy for improving productivity and profitability. Conducting a needs assessment to uncover the unique requirements of your practice is essential, but to maximize your investment, there are three key questions to keep top-of-mind:

1. **Does the solution provide central control over records while still allowing individual physicians the flexibility to adapt the system to the way they work?** Centralized content standards and storage facilitate compliance, create consistency, lead to greater information accessibility and reduce operating costs. At the same time, local flexibility ensures user adoption and empowers doctors to make their own decisions about how to maximize their clinical workflow. A quality hybrid system does not make you choose between flexibility and control—it allows both.
2. **Is the system easy to use?** Best-in-class hybrid solutions streamline records management and associated business processes without requiring extensive user training. They can be rapidly deployed, store information in non-proprietary formats such as TIFF or ASCII to guarantee future accessibility and compliance, and are built on an open architecture that is designed for integration and interoperability.
3. **Do you (and your colleagues) trust your vendor?** When a practice invests in software, it's not just buying technology, it's also buying a long-term relationship with the software vendor. As such, it is critical to assess the vendor's viability: How long has the company been in business? Is it committed to keeping up with the latest standards and regulatory requirements? Is it a private company that has ambitions to be acquired by larger organization that may or may not continue the product line? Learn as much as you can about the reputation of the vendors and products you're assessing: Talk to your colleagues, read industry reviews and be sure to ask vendors for customer references you can call directly.

As with any needs assessment, multiple stakeholders from across the practice should be involved in answering these questions and identifying the business problems that the technology must address. Practice managers, physicians and office staff should work together to ensure acceptance not only from the people who will implement the system, but also from those who will use it every day.

Conclusion

A 2006 study on the effects of traditional EMR suggests that using computers in the exam room negatively affects patient care by inhibiting eye contact, decreasing dialogue and reducing emotional responsiveness.

But physicians don't need to adopt expensive, hard-to-use technology that obstructs patient care to enjoy the benefits associated with electronic medical records, including:

- Improved access to records.
- Superior security that eases compliance.
- Decreased overhead costs.
- Increased productivity.
- Uncomplicated business continuity planning.

Hybrid EMR offers a natural, intuitive way to manage the flow of your practice. It is simple, easy-to-use technology that allows doctors to be fully present with their patients without sacrificing the benefits associated with electronic charts. It also provides a central and secure means of managing all of the practice's content—including patient charts and records, EOBs, invoices and more—without complicating existing processes, disrupting patient care or turning doctors into expensive scribes.

Efficient Operations

How Hybrid EMR Enables Dr. Brian Hanson to Put Patients First

As any practice manager can tell you, keeping track of patients' paper records requires more than a little blood, sweat and tears. Finding information can be difficult, paper and storage space are expensive, and office staff spends a lot of time organizing and updating records so that doctors can stay well-informed.

Such was certainly the case for Dr. Brian Hanson's gastroenterology (GI) practice in Ukiah, CA. One of just two GI doctors within a 90-mile radius in rural northern California, Hanson at times may see more than 200 patients a month. He's a member of several boards and committees, and his practice is affiliated with three different hospitals, two ambulatory surgery centers and two rural healthcare clinics that serve patients in both Mendocino and Lake Counties.

On any given day, Hanson might be found performing outpatient endoscopic procedures, providing acute inpatient gastroenterology services, or seeing patients for consultations at one of the outlying rural healthcare clinics or in his private office. His practice offers patient education programs, educational material, hospital consultations, 24-hour coverage in case of emergency, multiple offices located near local hospitals, and billing.

Stacie Sturges, Hanson's practice manager, has worked for the gastroenterologist since before he started his own office in 2004. "Dr. Hanson does everything in his power to put his patients first," Sturges explains, "but staying on top of such a huge volume of paperwork made everything more complicated. Having accurate, up-to-date information at our fingertips is essential, and paper-based records just weren't getting the job done.

"Before Laserfiche, a simple phone call from a patient triggered a lot of extra work for the office staff," she adds. "Hunting around for the patient's paper chart, paging through it to find the relevant information, noting the phone call in the record and then presenting everything to the doctor. It took a lot of time."

The practice had considered implementing a traditional electronic medical records (EMR) system, but, as Sturges says, "EMR is so complicated. Everyone knows that." Indeed, traditional EMR has a number of serious drawbacks, including:

- Prohibitive costs.
- Overly involved requirements for customization.
- Complicated changes to the existing clinical workflow.

The Natural Approach to EMR

Wary of disrupting patient care in service of complex EMR technology, Sturges discovered a more natural solution to the practice's information management challenges one day while reading *Healthcare IT News*. "I saw an ad for 'document management' and I knew that this was what we desperately needed."

Best-in-class content management software—with its ability to digitize, organize and store content from across the entire practice—is being adopted by many small medical offices that want an affordable and easy-to-use alternative to traditional EMR. These "hybrid" solutions (so named because they combine content management with other applications such as practice management and e-prescribe) provide a simple, centralized and secure means of managing patient records without complicating the clinical workflow.

“Most doctors’ offices like ours do not have an IT expert in their back pocket,” explains Sturges. “The fact that Laserfiche is so user friendly made it very appealing to us.”

In December 2008, Hanson’s practice purchased and installed the Laserfiche Avante suite from Laserfiche reseller AMI – The Paperless Company. In less than one week, AMI had installed the software and hardware and trained Hanson’s staff. According to Sturges, Hanson’s practice is using Laserfiche to “make our own EMR.”

In terms of the installation process, “The guys at AMI were awesome,” says Sturges. “They listened to what we had to say and organized our solution in a fashion that matched the way we wanted to work. Most importantly, our transition to a paperless office was effortless! The install was completely smooth.”

Today, with Laserfiche and three Fujitsu FI 6140 scanners in place, the office is running like a well-oiled machine. Hanson carries his Fujitsu Tablet PC wherever he goes so that he has real-time access to patient information. This enables him to immediately respond to issues that need attention instead of waiting to get back to the office and dealing with a pile of paper charts.

Technology that Adapts to the Practice

The more closely a software solution mirrors the day-to-day realities of a practice’s working methods, the more likely it is to deliver value. Sturges appreciates the flexibility of the Laserfiche solution, stating, “This isn’t one of those cookie cutter systems that you have to conform to. Most doctors like making their own decisions, and they don’t like being told what to do. Laserfiche allows them to decide how they want to work.”

Hanson’s practice has configured Laserfiche to handle a number of patient-related tasks, including:

- **Storing scanned records.** The folder structure in the Laserfiche repository is organized by patient. Each patient has a folder that contains subfolders for test results, surgical procedures, X-ray information and so forth. This keeps the information organized and easily accessible by authorized employees.
- **Automatically routing information.** Using Laserfiche Workflow, test results and other important patient updates are automatically sent to Dr. Hanson as soon as they are entered into the system. This speeds Hanson’s response to patients and saves staff time.
- **Rapidly processing records.** Hanson’s office has customized the document templates in Laserfiche Quick Fields by adding a status field that enables staff to quickly and easily identify urgent messages, call backs and real-time progress notes. In addition, automatic information capture and indexing cuts down on manual data entry and gets information into the system swiftly.
- **Facilitating compliance.** Laserfiche Audit Trail ensures information security and simplifies regulatory compliance. Hanson’s practice uses it to stay HIPAA-compliant by following the flow of information, keeping track of changes and noting what needs to be done next.

To Sturges, this is a clear-cut case of technology adapting to the flow of the practice, rather than the other way around. “We don’t need all the bells and whistles associated with traditional EMR,” she says. “Laserfiche has been a ‘meaningful use’ solution for us because it gives us exactly what we need to manage our office and improve patient care.”

Passing the Benefits Along to Patients

For Hanson's practice, Laserfiche has decreased the costs associated with storing and handling paper records, ensured the safety and accessibility of those records, and increased the efficiency of the practice's day-to-day operations and employees. Some of the chief benefits of the system include:

- Comprehensive search functionality allows staff to locate records within seconds.
- Remote access to the Laserfiche repository over a secure private network (VPN) gives Dr. Hanson the ability to instantly locate and amend records without pulling other staff members away from their jobs—even when he's not in the office.
- Multiple people can access the same digital record at the same time.
- No electronic records ever get lost.

All of these benefits, however, would be meaningless if they didn't ultimately enhance the quality of patient care.

"Providing top-quality care is of the utmost importance to Dr. Hanson," says Sturges. "We're always asking ourselves, 'How can we better serve this patient?' Many of them are facing really difficult decisions regarding their healthcare. They deserve answers, and they deserve them quickly. With Laserfiche, we coordinate care much faster because patient information is so much easier to find."

Laserfiche[®]

Institute[®]

The Laserfiche Institute teaches staff, resellers, and current and prospective clients how to use Laserfiche most effectively. As part of this mission, the Institute conducts more than 500 Webinars each year, covering a variety of topics. The Institute also hosts an annual conference where members of the Laserfiche community attend presentations and network to share ideas and learn best practices. Additionally, the Institute conducts a number of regional training sessions and provides resellers with content for more than 100 user conferences each year.

The Institute also develops and distributes educational material through the Laserfiche Support Site. On this Website, clients can access training videos, participate in online forums and download technical papers and presentations that help them become savvier ECM users.

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