



Healthcare IT News

PHYSICIAN PRACTICES & AMBULATORY CARE

NEWSBRIEFS

DAVIES AWARDS FOR EMRS GO TO FOUR PRACTICES

The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) has announced the winners of the 2004 Davies Awards of Excellence. The Nicholas E. Davies Award honors healthcare organizations for their excellence in electronic health record (EHR) implementation. Four private practices were selected as 2004 winners for the Primary Care Davies Award. North Fulton Family Medicine, located in Cumming, Ga., has two sites that see 51,000 patients annually. Old Harding Pediatric Associates in Nashville, Tenn., is a two-site pediatric practice that employs 14 physicians and a staff of more than 50. By contrast, Pediatrics @ the Basin of Pittsford, N.Y., and Riverpoint Pediatrics of Chicago, are small pediatric practices that achieved huge clinical and financial gains from their EHR implementations.

OBGYN PRACTICE REAPS BENEFITS OF EMR

New York-based Oswego County OBGYN reports achieving a \$400,000 return on investment after one year's use of an electronic medical record system. The practice, which has nine medical professionals and sees more than 200 patients a day at five locations, implemented PrimeSuite, technology developed by Carrollton, Ga.-based Greenway Medical Technologies. PrimeSuite is based on Microsoft technologies. The practice's 70,000 medical records were increasingly difficult to handle and distribute to appropriate offices in time for patient visits, said Dan Mather, practice manager for Oswego County OBGYN. The EMR solution integrates a medical practice's clinical, financial, and administrative processes. Nearly half of the \$407,000 return on investment from the solution, \$193,764, comes from an increase in the gross collection rate of 52.2 percent to 56.4 percent, according to Mather.

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS E-PRESCRIBING SAVINGS

Health insurance companies could save about \$575 a month for each physician who uses an electronic prescribing system developed by Wellinx Inc. of Creve Coeur, Mo., according to a study published last month in the *Annals of Family Medicine*. The study found that health insurers with at least a 35 percent market share could save that amount for each primary-care physician in their network in the first six months. Later, researchers found the monthly savings continued to grow, reaching more than \$1,000 for each physician.

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VA EHR tweaked for private practice

CMS puts VistA system on fast track for July rollout.

BY FRED BAZZOLI, *Managing editor*

WASHINGTON – The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is working at a rapid pace to bring a full-bodied electronic health record system, already in use in the veterans health system, to physician offices.

Work is under way on adapting VistA, the electronic health record of the Veteran's Health Administration, for availability in July

2005. Developers are currently recasting the software, to be distributed as VistA-Office EHR, to run on Windows operating systems.

"The goal is to make it available free of charge to the public," said Cynthia Wark, acting deputy director for the information systems group of the office of clinical standards and quality for CMS.

A freely available version of an electronic health record would address one of the biggest obstacles to implementation listed by physicians – cost. However, other ques-

tions, such as support uncertainty for the new program and the lack of IT acumen in physician offices, still remain.

VistA is a proven application with a 20-year history. It's now used in 1,300 diverse healthcare settings, and it supports about five million veterans annually, Wark said. It's also used by the Washington (D.C.) Department of Health, and it's been modified and used by the Indian Health Service.

VistA-Office EHR matches almost all of the specifications of the VISTA see page 14

TAKING THE LEAP

Two practices talk about how they overcame the No. 1 barrier to EMR.

BY BERNIE MONEGAIN, *News/online editor*

SAN FRANCISCO – Upfront costs remains one of the major barriers for many medical practices thinking about adopting electronic medical records, William Jessee, MD, told an audience at the 2004 Medical Group Management Association annual conference here last month.

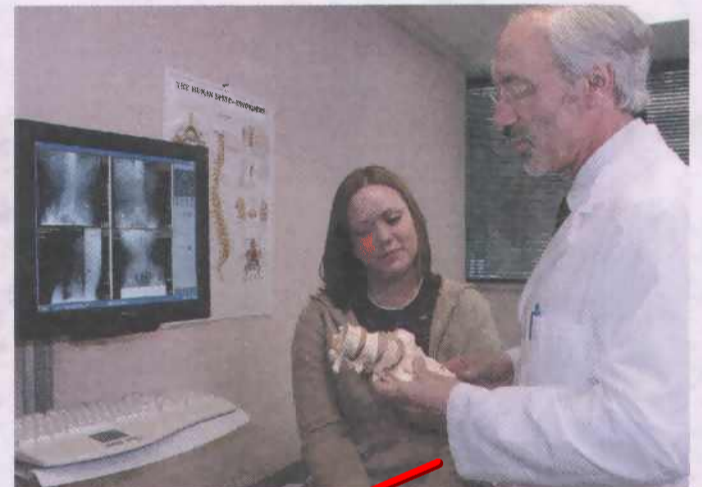
Jessee, president and chief

executive officer of the MGMA, based his assertion on a recent association survey that showed 25 percent of the respondents viewed upfront costs as a deterrent to converting their paper records to electronic ones.

However, there are many examples of practices that have overcome this barrier, and today, they're urging others to do the same.

Their response to the initial costs, which can add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars? Borrow the money.

Colorado Otolaryngology Associates, a LEAP see page 14



Tallahassee Orthopedic Clinic, Tallahassee, Fla., recently installed a Kodak digital imaging and information system that captures medical X-ray exams digitally and transmits them to all of the clinic's 52 exam rooms. Here orthopedic specialist Gregg Alexander, MD, discusses his diagnosis and recommended treatment with a patient.

Chronic disease monitoring takes hold

BY BERNIE MONEGAIN, *News/online editor*

CARLSBAD, CA – Physicians around the country are reaping benefits from online programs that help them track their patients' chronic diseases, such as asthma and diabetes.

Patients are uploading real-time data via the phone or the Internet.

Timothy Bailey, MD, an endocrinologist in Escondido, Calif. says it means better and timelier patient care.

If one of Bailey's patients reports out-of-control diabetes, Bailey is able to view that patient's numbers immediately and offer advice right away instead of having to conduct an

extended interrogation.

Jim McCallum, MD, an endocrinologist at Scripps Clinic in Loyola, Calif., finds the monitoring system saves time for both doctors and patients, and it helps him more easily identify patterns, he said.

Bailey, McCallum and their patients **DIABETES** see page 14



Study: Docs slow on IT uptake

NEW YORK – A new study from Manhattan Research reveals that many physician practices remain skeptical about the benefits associated with point-of-care technologies.

"We must work to break down barriers of skepticism among physicians by strategically targeting and positioning physician champions," said Erika Fishman, senior analyst at Manhattan Research.

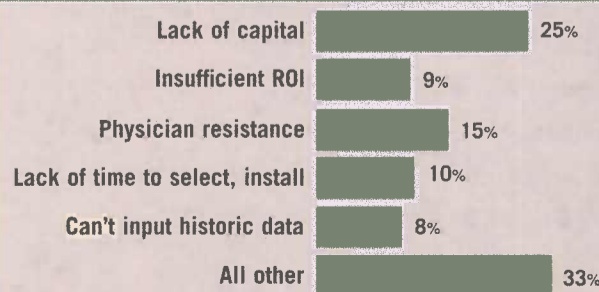
Manhattan Research is a mar-

keting information and services firm. Its clients include global pharmaceutical and biotech companies, not-for-profit health organizations, technology vendors, health content providers, and health plans.

The study was based on in-depth telephone interviews with 1,201 physicians called randomly during the first quarter of 2004. ■

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Barriers preventing medical practices from implementing EMRs



Connect: GRAPHS 1104

SOURCE: MEDICAL GROUP MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

UC Physicians plan EMR launch

CINCINNATI – One of the largest specialty physician groups in the Cincinnati area is launching a multimillion-dollar electronic record system aimed at eliminating duplicate tests and reducing medical errors.

UC Physicians expects to pay about \$1 million a year in access fees to Integrated Management Services, a part of the Health

Alliance of Greater Cincinnati that will buy the computer system and hire most of the people needed to run it.

The practice plans to go live with the first part of its system in the spring of 2005.

In the past year, doctors at UC Physicians handled more than 280,000 patient visits and began treatment for 43,731 new patients.

VISTA

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EHR draft standard for trial use recently approved through Health Level Seven, Wark said.

Development work is under way to make VistA-Office EHR easier to use, she said.

“We’re going to make it more user-friendly. Some changes need to be made to the registration process, because VistA was set up to work with veterans facilities,” she said. “The intent is to keep the underlying

technology the same and make modifications as needed to make it installable in an office setting.”

VistA, which is public domain software, is used in a few hospitals outside the VHA, but not in stand-alone physician offices.

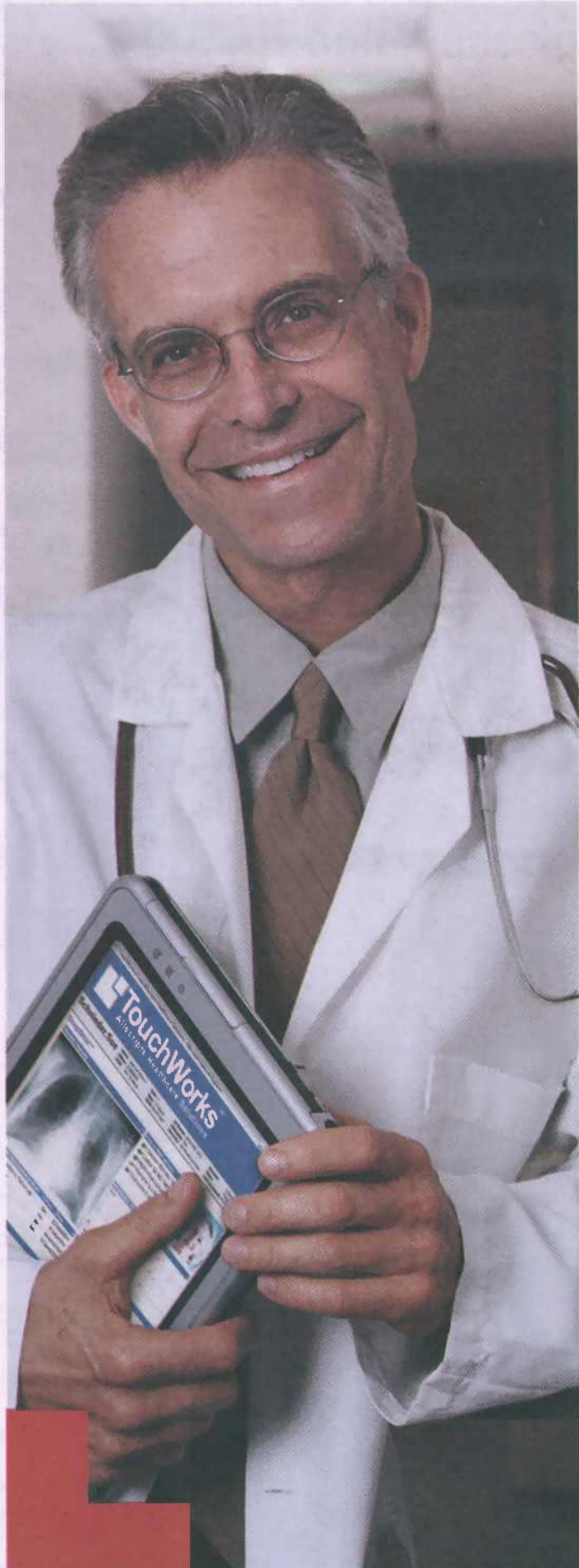
Physician offices that use VistA-Office EHR would have to pay license fees for the MUMPS technology application environment, Cache, the programming language and database management system with which VistA-Office EHR is built.

Realizing product support could loom as an issue. CMS is talking to vendors who might want to include VistA-Office EHR support among their services.

While some EHR vendors have questioned whether CMS will offer competing software, Wark dismisses those concerns. “There are a lot of services that vendors offer that CMS is not in a position to offer. We’re not looking to compete with vendors.” ■

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LEAP

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seven-physician practice, negotiated with the vendor, Oak Ridge, Tenn.-based AllMeds Inc., which arranged for financing.

“We didn’t want to put any money upfront,” said Judy Boesen, administrator for the practice.

Instead each doctor paid \$725 per month over three years.

The monthly payments were manageable, she said. “The ROI (return on investment) is phenomenal. We could have paid off the entire investment twice over in the first year.”

David Rinehart, MD, partner in South Point Family Practice, an eight-physician group in North Carolina, did the same. The practice, which has been in operation for 27 years, has about 40,000 patients.

Rinehart used loans to pay for what he estimates was a \$200,000 implementation of a system developed by Westborough, Mass.-based eClinicalWorks, and now pays \$20,000 in transcription fees, instead of \$120,000 as he once did.

Colorado Otolaryngology increased patient visits by 4 percent, and their payments, through better coding and charge capture, increased 17 percent the first year and 16 percent the second year. ■

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DIABETES

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with diabetes use technology from Carlsbad, Calif.-based iMetrikus. iMetrikus, along with technology companies, such as Eclipsys Corp., WebMD and Per Se Technologies, are among those that have developed software to enable chronically ill patients to upload results from devices such as blood glucose meters and blood pressure cuffs.

Acceptance has been a long time coming, says Rose Higgins, vice president of sales and marketing for iMetrikus. “Our biggest accomplishment has been riding out the market’s readiness,” she said. “It’s taken a little while for the market to mature.” Today iMetrikus boasts more than 100,000 users, of which 5,000 are physicians or other healthcare providers. ■

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