

Profile

Georgia Sports Medicine

Making the electronic patient record a reality.



*William McDonald
Georgia Sports Medicine*

While medical practices throughout the nation are beginning to see the benefits of the electronic medical records system, many have yet to make the switch from a paper-based system. Somewhat of a pioneer in the electronic medical records revolution, Georgia Sports Medicine, a three-physician, orthopedic practice in Tifton, Ga., has found increased efficiency and productivity due to its electronic medical records system.

In 1997, when William McDonald joined Georgia Sports Medicine as administrator, transcriptionists were using typewriters, the posting of encounter forms was continually delayed for up to eight weeks, and the practice employed three full-time employees whose sole job was to hunt down paper charts.

"Now, we use an entirely electronic system thanks to months of analysis, input from every employee in the office, and The Medical Manager[®] system," said McDonald. "On June 15, 1998, we stopped making paper charts."

"Now, we use an entirely electronic system thanks to months of analysis, input from every employee in the office, and The Medical Manager system."

*William McDonald
Georgia Sports Medicine*

The Analysis

With the help of Jack Woodham, a reseller of The Medical Manager software in Columbus, Ga., McDonald began with an analysis of the practice's current system. He noticed that with five locations serving 150 to 225 patients a day, the practice's server was reaching full capacity. Becoming Medicare compliant was also a pressing issue. Whether they were going to update their current paper-based system or move to an electronic medical records system, they knew they were looking at a complete overhaul.

The prospect of a system that afforded employees the opportunity to access a single chart simultaneously appealed to McDonald immensely. "While that was a motivating factor in the decision to use an electronic system," McDonald said, "it came down to a bottom line number."



That bottom line number, he discovered, was \$15-16 per paper chart. He found that even with the initial start-up costs associated with upgrading a computer system, the total cost of an electronic system was equal to that of a paper system the first year. After that, the costs of a paper system would only rise, while the costs of an electronic system would go down.

[The Medical Manager Document and Image Management System](#)

After the decision was made to go electronic, the practice purchased The Medical Manager Document and Image Management System. With its own independent server and a 250-CD jukebox, the Document and Image Management System instantly became a vital component to the practice's electronic medical records system. "It's a fantastic piece of the puzzle," said McDonald.

A new addition to Medical Manager Corporation's clinical product line, the Document and Image Management System helps practices like Georgia Sports Medicine reduce operating costs, optimize work flow, and offer better patient service by managing hard-copy images and documentation in digital form. The easy-to-use, customizable system allows every piece of paper that comes into Georgia Sports Medicine to be scanned, cataloged and electronically stored. Employees have the ability to immediately and simultaneously access every X-ray, insurance card, letter, and any other documentation in a patient's file. The system allows the practice to manage files as it always has, choosing an appropriate name for a file and cataloging it according to their specific needs. Files can be retrieved, printed, and faxed at any time with their original format and appearance intact.

With high-speed scanners, Georgia Sports Medicine finds itself posting encounter forms in hours instead of weeks. The Document and Image Management System allows the practice to be fully Medicare compliant, and they have the added benefit of increased security since a patient's chart can be password protected.

[View Patient Chart](#)

McDonald says that View Patient Chart is another key element to their electronic records system. "View Patient Chart allows us to see the patient as a whole person," he said. "It's a miracle piece."

Also called the "gateway to the electronic chart," View Patient Chart is a powerful clinical tool that provides a snapshot of the patient's medical record on a single screen and gives Georgia Sports Medicine instant access to almost any level of underlying detail. From one screen, the user can view and navigate through up to 20 different components of a patient's chart. Whether the

A new addition to Medical Manager Corporation's clinical product line, the Document and Image Management system helps practices like Georgia Sports Medicine reduce operating costs, optimize work flow, and offer better patient service by managing hard-copy images and documentation in digital form.

physician wants to see the patient's vitals, case history, medications, lab tests, or any transcribed note, every bit of information on the patient is available through View Patient Chart. With the simple click of the mouse or just a few keystrokes, physicians can access complete detail of each item. View Patient Chart is also fully customizable, allowing Georgia Sports Medicine the flexibility to define which data is displayed on default.

Paper Reduction

In addition to the cost savings and simultaneous access of medical charts, another benefit of an electronic system is the reduction of paper to be stored. Electronic medical records users find themselves with hundreds of square feet of extra office space that was formerly required for paper storage. The reliability and thoroughness of an electronic records system from Medical Manager Corporation allows practices to feel secure in eliminating files upon files of hard-copy documentation.

What does Georgia Sports Medicine do with all of the paper they no longer need? "We shred it," said McDonald. "We keep most documentation on hand for two weeks, but after that it's shredded. On any particular day, we'll have 15 to 20 bags of shredded paper going out of the office."

Employee and Physician Acceptance Vital

Important to the success of any electronic medical records system is the acceptance and reception of a practice's physicians and staff. From day one of McDonald's analysis of the system, the staff was involved in weekly meetings to determine each individual's needs and to identify what it would take to allow the departments to efficiently communicate with each other. In designing new operational systems around the electronic records system, each employee's needs were addressed allowing the employee to be directly involved. Speaking of the staff's enthusiasm for the system, McDonald said, "My staff loves the system. If you asked them if they would want to go back to the old way, they would come back with a resounding 'no'."

McDonald extends credit to his staff for embracing the technology: "Without them," he said "we would not have been able to do it. They are the people who use the system; they are the ones who helped us analyze our needs; they are the ones who had to be receptive to the idea. The system is nothing by itself unless there are people to use it."

"We keep most documentation on hand for two weeks, but after that it's shredded. On any particular day, we'll have 15 to 20 bags of shredded paper going out of the office."

*William McDonald
Georgia Sports Medicine*



Providing Better Patient Care

Looking back on the process, McDonald says that although the over-burdened server and Medicare compliance were what instigated the change, the bottom line is that they needed a system that would allow them to provide better patient care. "With every decision we make in this office, we ask ourselves, 'Will this help us help our patients?'" said McDonald. "Whether it's an additional phone line or a complete overhaul of our system, we make sure that any change goes to help us provide better care."

With The Medical Manager software, Georgia Sports Medicine has found a system that helps them provide better patient care. When a patient calls in with a question, the call is handled swiftly and easily, immediately providing the patient with the information he or she needs. The practice has also installed workstations in its exam rooms to allow the physicians instant access to patient data as they conduct the exam. With clinical information at their fingertips, the physician can make a better diagnosis and provide better overall patient care.

"We're glad to be able to show other users of The Medical Manager system that the vision of electronic medical records can become a reality," said McDonald. "It's amazing to see how far we've come in just two years. Our electronic records system has improved our productivity and efficiency immensely."

The Medical Manager software, a product of Medical Manager Corporation, has over 25,000 installations nationwide and is used by more than 120,000 physicians in over 80 specialties. For more information, contact Medical Manager Sales & Marketing, Inc. at 800.222.7701.



**Medical
Manager**
Sales & Marketing, Inc.

Medical Manager Sales & Marketing, Inc.
516 Clyde Avenue
Mountain View, California 94043
Telephone 800.222.7701
E-mail info@mdmgr.com
Web www.medicalmanager.com

The Medical Manager is a registered trademark of Medical Manager Research & Development, Inc.
MM-GASP 08-99