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Case Study: Obtaining the Right EMR Solution

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When Cardiovascular Institute of the South (CIS) made the decision to replace its paper-based chart system with an EMR system, we assumed the EMR, with its various bells and whistles, would first and foremost solve our fundamental paper problem. Unfortunately, securing technology is not always the answer—un-

less, of course, it is the right technology. It took us several attempts to find the appropriate system for our environment.

CIS consists of nearly 40 physicians, including cardiologists, cardiovascular surgeons, and thoracic surgeons, and a staff of more than 500 at 10 locations throughout southern Louisiana. CIS patient visits total approximately 186,000 yearly in all locations.

We had been looking at EMRs for the better part of ten years, trying to ascertain which product would be best for us. Back in 1999, we purchased our first EMR. Thirty days after we paid a substantial sum of money, the vendor discontinued the product. We were devastated because transitioning to a traditional EMR is a lengthy and costly process. Unfortunately, the next product we selected was discontinued as well.

In our third attempt, we partnered with a vendor who had a product in another specialty but was interested in developing a cardiology-specific product. We had many successes and the future looked bright—until we began entering discrete data elements at the point of service during office visits. That was the instant we recognized that it was unrealistic to expect physicians to input the minutiae of data that the system required.

We went back to square one to determine what we really wanted. The immediate answer was to get our paper under control. We were getting faxes from fourteen hospitals every day, and we had callbacks and patient needs that had to be documented. A consultant recommended that we consider a hybrid EMR system. This time, though, we brought that recommendation to all CIS employees.

A hybrid EMR is a scalable solution that has a robust document management engine that works simultaneously with powerful data management and workflow modules. These modules address messaging, prescriptions, transcriptions, diagnostic test reports, test orders, and industry and government-sponsored incentive-reporting program initiatives.

We found a hybrid EMR system that, from a senior management perspective, looked amazing, but because of our early failures, we decided to take a different approach. We had to have every member of CIS be excited about this solution.

We used what we called the “Wikipedia approach” to making a decision, meaning everyone had a chance to review the system and comment on it.

When decision time came, we had every employee place his or her vote to purchase or not purchase the system. The vote was an overwhelming 95% in favor of purchasing the SRSsoft solution. We learned that a robust, intuitive, easy-to-use solution is what’s important for staff and physician buy-in.

We have noticed huge improvements in workflow, office efficiency, and response time to patients and referring physicians. Every piece of paper is joined with the digital chart the day it arrives. Everyone has instant access to complete and organized charts anytime from anywhere. The efficient flow of pertinent information, communication, and collaboration has far exceeded our expectations.