

# The Record

FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE IT SERVES

## Electronic record-filing system is just what the doctor ordered

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Something is missing in Dr. John Andronaco's Hackensack office, and he couldn't be happier.

Bulky paper files? They're a thing of the past, Andronaco says. Instead, for nearly eight years, the orthopedic surgeon has been doing all his record keeping online, using a software system developed by SRSsoft Inc. of Montvale to manage his practice.

He no longer needs to rent space to store patient records, and those records are now available to Andronaco, his staff and colleagues 24/7 from anywhere in the world with access to a high-speed computer.

"Both my staff and I wouldn't even think of going back to the old paper chart," Andronaco said. "My office now operates at peak efficiency, and paper charts are nowhere to be seen."

That's the whole idea, said Evan Steele, SRSsoft's chief executive. The former investment banker started the company with his brother and a computer programmer in 1997, and it has grown steadily ever since.

The idea grew out of trying to help his brother Mark find a better way to handle the mounting pile of paperwork generated by a growing six-doctor,



**STEELE**

four-office pediatric ophthalmology practice.

With no suitable software program available, the two Steeles hired a programmer to develop their own. The programmer, an unidentified silent partner, is the "R" and the brothers are the two "S's" in the company name.

"The rest kind of happened," Steele said.

They developed what they called Clinical Manager, and began marketing it at medical conferences even as they continued refining the software in response to doctors' suggestions.

The information is stored on a server in the doctor's office and is available to multiple users at the same time, he said.

So when there is a medical emergency while the doctor is on vacation or in the hospital, he or a consulting physician has

immediate access to a patient's complete file.

"That's what I love about it," Andronaco said. "Another doctor will call, and I can have the chart in front of me and can discuss the case right away.

"With the old system, information was sometimes misfiled or misplaced. Or it could be sitting on someone's desk to schedule surgery or for billing, and I would have to track it down."

The cost is reasonable, Andronaco said. He purchased the software for a "couple thousand dollars," and pays a yearly fee for upgrades for less than \$1,000, he said. In addition, he spent less than \$10,000 for eight computers and a couple of printers.

But he has saved the \$350-a-month rent he used to pay for storage space, so the system is paying for itself.

SRSsoft services 41 medical specialties, with generic software modified to handle the specific needs of each, Steele said.

So the software for a pediatrician includes a digital growth chart, while an obstetrician's would include a flow sheet that tracks each pregnancy.

Steele calls Clinical Manager a hybrid of medical record keeping, combining scanned documents and fill-in-the-blank templates.

"Historically, electronic

medical record designers have missed the fundamental reason for their products' existence by demanding that physicians conform to the developer's idea of work flow and data collection," Steele said.

"SRSsoft is just the opposite," Steele said. "We design our software to conform to the users' preferences."

The formula seems to be working, as SRSsoft serves about 4,000 doctors around the nation, with a significant presence in orthopedics, cardiology, ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynecology, and multi-practice groups.

As a private company, SRSsoft does not disclose its finances beyond saying it is profitable, revenues have grown by 59 percent and it has expanded its staff from 25 to 80 in the past two years.

"Part of our growth strategy is that 20 percent of the employees are software developers and they account for 25 percent of the payroll," Steele said. "We spend a lot of money on research and development."

The steady growth has forced the company to relocate within Montvale three times since moving from the basement of a Columbus Avenue brownstone in New York City in 2003.

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