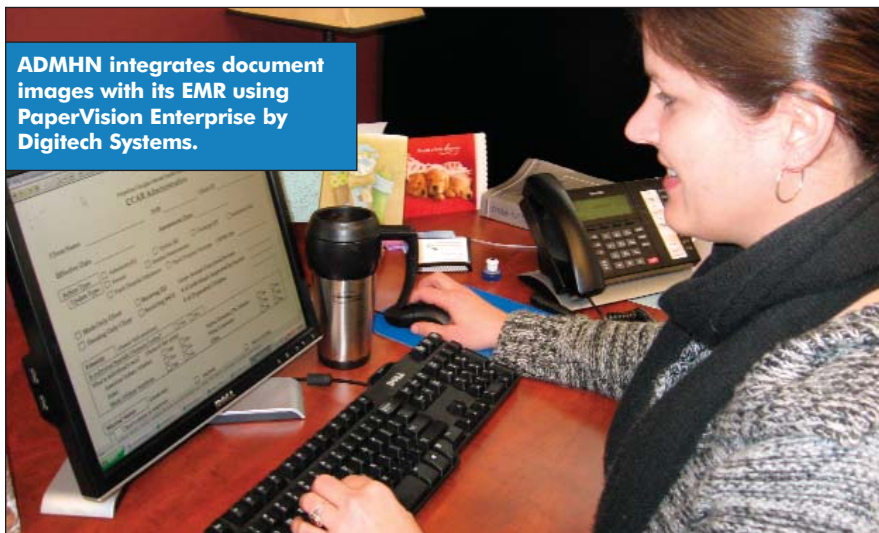




Document Scanning Makes An EMR Whole

A mental health facility increases productivity 31% by leveraging document scanning to supplement its EMR (electronic medical record) system.

by Ken Congdon



Moving to an EMR system doesn't always result in a paperless utopia where complete patient information is available electronically with the touch of a button. In fact, oftentimes, the transition to EMR technology creates a recordkeeping nightmare where both electronic and paper information must be managed in tandem. This scenario is all too familiar to Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network (ADMHN).

ADMHN is a nonprofit community mental health center serving Colorado residents in Arapahoe and Douglas counties. With 10 locations and 250 employees, ADMHN provides mental health services, substance abuse services, and a full range of residential programs. Unlike most healthcare facilities, ADMHN was an early adopter of EMR technology. The facility purchased its EMR system in 2001 and was surprised when the technology didn't fully eliminate the need to maintain paper records.

"After 2001, the majority of our internal recordkeeping was being done electron-

ically via the EMR," says Eric Moore, CIO of ADMHN. "However, many of our payors and auditing authorities did not accept electronic documents, which required us to print many EMR documents for client signature and store them in paper form. Additionally, when clients were transferred to our facility from other hospitals, treatment centers, or primary care physicians, we would receive paper treatment records that needed to be retained in paper charts as well."

Paper was also a necessary evil when it came to obtaining the required physician signatures needed to authorize specific treatments or procedures. Many treatment regulations required actual signatures on forms and evidence of those signatures preserved in a paper format.

Managing both paper and electronic information was a cumbersome process. For example, the electronic information available through the EMR was often incomplete, and the paper charts were not always easily accessible. Paper charts would travel through

ADMHN's system of offices and sometimes got misplaced or stuck in transit. Without the paper record, physicians couldn't get a complete view into each patient's condition and treatment. Furthermore, paper charts were vulnerable to loss or damage by theft, fire, flood, etc.

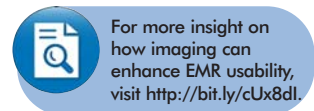
IMAGE STANDARDS ARE KEY TO EMR COMPATIBILITY

ADMHN decided that the best solution to this problem was to scan all of its paper patient documents into the EMR. The facility initially considered the built-in scanning capabilities of the EMR it purchased. However, the facility was uncomfortable with the proprietary nature of the scanning application.

"Our EMR software's scanning feature stored document images in a proprietary file format in the EMR repository," says Moore. "These images could not easily be transported or accessed if we decided to switch to a different EMR system down the road."

For this reason, ADMHN began to search for a stand-alone, standards-based scanning software platform that could easily be integrated with its existing EMR. ADMHN turned to the EMR National User Group for advice on a suitable scanning platform. At the time, this group consisted of 600 healthcare providers, several of which recommended PaperVision Enterprise by Digitech Systems as a proven solution in use at their facilities.

With this information, ADMHN purchased PaperVision Enterprise in September 2007 and installed it in the





final quarter of that year. The facility used custom programming to integrate the scanning software with its customized, UNIX-based EMR.

PaperVision Enterprise stores document images in a variety of standard formats (including PDF and TIFF). This allows document images to be accessed not only by ADMHN's current EMR, but also by most other EMRs and software systems on the market. Furthermore, as a result of ADMHN's custom programming, all document images are accessible directly via the EMR software interface. In other words, users do not have to open a separate document imaging interface in order to access images related to an EMR record, making record retrieval easier and available to all its clinical EMR users, at any location.

IMAGING ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY, AUDITS

Since the PaperVision Enterprise system has been implemented, ADMHN has realized a number of operational benefits. First, ADMHN can now electronically access all documents related to a patient via the same interface. This has contributed to a 31% increase in productivity — a direct result of office managers and physicians no longer having to search for and file paper files. Furthermore, having all patient documents stored electronically has also enhanced ADMHN's compliance with HIPAA (The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act) and other state/federal regulations.

Another benefit is the added floor space the scanning platform has provided ADMHN. "By scanning all paper patient documents, we have been able to shrink our record storage facilities by almost two thirds," says Moore. "In fact, six months ago, we were able to convert half the records room in one of our buildings into two clinical offices for seeing patients."

Finally, the new scanning platform has created new efficiencies in ADMHN's audit processes. As a men-

tal health facility, ADMHN is audited by a variety of different entities (e.g. state and county government agencies, independent audits, etc.). "When managing paper files, the prep time to pull all necessary records and files was about four days," says Moore. "Furthermore, auditors were forced to spend hours thumbing through hundreds of pages of

records to find the information they needed. Since documents are now stored electronically, the prep time for audits has been cut to less than one day, and auditors can search for files electronically via an index-based search screen. This makes the process easier on all involved, making us all more productive." ■

FREE Subscription

ECM Connection

To renew your free subscription, go to www.ECMConnection.com