

# Three Rivers Family Medicine Successfully Adopts ChartConnect in Two Phases

## case study

Dr. Michael Pattillo of Three Rivers Family Medicine in Richland, Washington compares the adoption of electronic medical records (EMR) to getting into a swimming pool. "Some people just dive in while others slowly dip, starting with their big toe," he says.

According to Pattillo, who specializes in internal medicine and pediatrics, adopting an EMR system depends on a physician's comfort level with technology as well as a practice's financial situation. For this reason, he and his partners decided that a two-phase implementation would be an effective way to move the practice away from paper and slowly introduce EMR.



The practice started by using ChartConnect ResultManager, an online application with direct interfaces with local labs, radiology centers and hospitals that allows physicians and their staff to electronically view and sign-off on results and reports. For a year and a half, the practice used ResultManager, which, according to Pattillo helped them manage patient information and eliminate paperwork. Then Pattillo convinced his colleagues to move to ChartConnect's full EMR.

Three Rivers Family Medicine has been using the full ChartConnect EMR now for over eight months. Dr. Pattillo believes the EMR is having a major impact on streamlining office workflow, improving communication with the practice's healthcare partners and more efficiently supporting their patients. Of the 40-member staff, about 30 people—including the front desk, switchboard, billing, nurses, medical assistants and most of the doctors—are using different features and adopting them at different paces.

"For me, with new patients, paper charts are now almost obsolete because information is input from the first visit," he says, adding: "Before ChartConnect, my desk always had a huge stack of charts. Now, there's maybe one chart."

For Pattillo, ChartConnect's flexibility is a major benefit. With ChartConnect's EMR, physicians can input information into charts the quickest and easiest way—by using macros, templates or dictation. ChartConnect also allows several



*ChartConnect, Inc. provides a comprehensive electronic medical record for physician practices and hospitals nationwide, offering a range of products to help providers connect with their healthcare community to streamline workflow and increase efficiency. For more information, visit [www.chartconnect.com](http://www.chartconnect.com).*

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people to simultaneously view a patient's chart, which not only reduces what he calls "the paper chase" but also saves time for the office staff and patients. Pattillo gives the example of a well child whose chart is being reviewed for a shot while someone else on the staff is setting up an auditory evaluation.

From Pattillo's perspective, ChartConnect's three key benefits include e prescribing, the ability to send records, and connectivity. Pattillo says ChartConnect's e-prescribing component—MedManager—lets him instantly manage medication refills and new prescriptions. Pattillo, who fills 15-20 medication refills a day, rarely pulls a chart now since he can communicate electronically with pharmacies. This not only makes managing refill requests simple but also keeps patients' medication lists and drug histories up to date and in one place.

For sending patient records, Pattillo says ChartConnect's Send Records function is extremely helpful, especially when he needs to refer patient to a specialist. "If you use it correctly, it will eliminate faxes, copies and mailing," he says. With the records function, he can instantly review all of the records and then—with one click—send the patient's history and information.

ChartConnect's connectivity also is invaluable to Pattillo, giving him secure access to a complete spectrum of patient data. "I can get information where and whenever, as long as I have an Internet. Plus, I know it's HIPAA compliant," he explains. Using ChartConnect's full EMR has dramatically changed how Pattillo manages middle of the night phone calls, especially when he's on call. Whether it's a patient calling with a problem or an emergency room crisis, Pattillo has instant access to medical records.

"Instead of going back to my office, I can quickly and easily pull up notes to see what a patient means by saying he's taking a 'little red pill,'" he explains. And if Pattillo speaks with a patient after hours and determines a follow-up appointment is necessary, he sends a message to his nurse asking her to call the patient the next day.

In addition to reducing paper and increasing his efficiency, Pattillo says ChartConnect has significantly reduced transcription costs. Although Pattillo tends to input directly into his laptop, he still likes to use a blend of options because he doesn't want to make what he calls "cookie cutter notes." He uses templates when appropriate but usually adds a personal comment about each patient. Before using ChartConnect, Pattillo averaged \$60-\$70 a day in transcriptions. He reports this cost has now been cut by one-half to one-third, since with an EMR there is no longer a need to dictate patient history and mediations.

Patients also reap the benefits when their doctors use EMRs. Pattillo estimates that 95% of the time,

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he can pull up information and show it to his patients on the laptop or print out information. "I don't need to ask someone to find me a chart or call the lab or hospital to get information, because it's always available," he says.

Pattillo is also impressed with how using ChartConnect's Send Records function allows him to connect to labs, hospitals, pharmacies and other doctors in his community. He says it's a "huge deal" to be able to send records electronically to local specialists. With ChartConnect, he can quickly review what is being sent and then with one-click, know the information is transferred, eliminating faxes, copies and mailing. Because of ChartConnect EMR, he and a specialist once ended up working in "real time," and solved his patient's problem immediately instead of over what might have taken two weeks.

ChartConnect, according to Pattillo, is very responsive to requests for new features, such as a pediatric growth chart. He sees ChartConnect EMR as especially good for family practice physicians who end up as the keeper of so much patient information. Although Pattillo acknowledges that the initial set-up for EMR takes time and requires physicians to change how they work, overall he says, "It's definitely worth it."



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