

# CASE STUDY

## CRYSTAL LAKE HEALTH CENTER, BENZONIA, MI



HEALTHMATICS® EMR  
ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORD



*Crystal Lake Health Center is an independently owned Rural Health Clinic founded in 1992 with three sites in northern Michigan; Benzonia, Bear Lake and Frankfort. The practice consists of two family practice physicians, two internal medicine physicians, one pediatrician, one family nurse practitioner, physician assistant and 19 support staff.*

### PRACTICE PROFILE

<b>Type of Practice/Specialty</b>	Rural Health Center for Medicare: Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics
<b>Date Practice Founded</b>	1992
<b>Go-Live Date</b>	March 2003
<b>Number of Locations</b>	3
<b>Number of Physicians</b>	5
<b>Number of Employees</b>	30
<b>Number of Clinical Users</b>	5
<b>Number of Non-Clinical Users</b>	22
<b>PM Vendor/Interface</b>	HEALTHMATICS® PM
<b>Lab Vendor/Interface</b>	Quest, LIS at Munson Hospital
<b>Hardware</b>	Dell® servers and PCs, and mobile notebooks

### SEEKING THE BEST SOLUTION

Crystal Lake began looking at EMRs approximately three years ago. With three locations and providers traveling between sites, paper records were being faxed or transported on a daily basis. Marketing the fact that patients could be seen at any location created the need to look at better ways of accessing medical records. Improving patient care by having all information “real-time” and readily accessible, no matter where the patient was being seen, was the driving factor in the EMR search. Improving documentation to meet all regulations was also needed. Because of the number of providers, there were potentially 21 different places a chart could “hide,” creating difficulty for staff and providers when a chart could not be found.

When looking at EMRs, Crystal Lake identified a number of criteria that a computerized system must meet, including: a database system to enable reporting on specific aspects of the patient visit; customization and ease of use for both providers and staff; ability to completely replace paper charts and eliminate transcription costs.

After evaluating several EMR systems, Crystal Lake chose A4's HEALTHMATICS EMR for several reasons. First, it met the initial criteria established for an EMR. Second, although their old Practice Management (PM) system could be interfaced with A4's EMR, it was archaic and lacked flexible reporting. After looking at the complete package of PM and EMR, Crystal Lake also decided to purchase A4's HEALTHMATICS PM system because they valued the “import” of diagnoses and charges from the EMR. This benefit would eliminate transposition of numbers and reduce errors experienced when staff members had to decode physicians' work, saving time and effort.

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#### IMPLEMENTATION:

Crystal Lake went live on HEALTHMATICS EMR in March 2003. All exam rooms were wired, equipment purchased and staff and providers trained. The practice set up wireless connections for the laptops and in the exam rooms of the two smaller sites. "We decided to put computers in every exam room, nursing desk, provider desk and furnish each provider with a laptop to enable access wherever a provider may be," noted Deborah Gatrell, practice administrator. "We decided that we would fully utilize the system on day one with electronic transferring of laboratory data and faxing of prescriptions and referrals," added Dr. Richard Nielsen, president.

#### COUNTING THE BENEFITS

- **Crystal Lake Health Center has been able to eliminate one FTE to set up referral appointments for diagnostic studies and specialty care.** With the EMR system, they now fax orders for x-rays, mammograms and bone density tests as well as referral letters for specialists through the EMR to a number of facilities, including Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, Munson Medical Center and West Shore Medical Center. The EMR also prints out patient instructions detailing who to call to schedule the appointment, and the receiving organization has the order in hand before the patient leaves the office.
- **Laboratory results are electronically transferred to the EMR system through an interface with the local facilities, allowing for instant review by the physician.** The system can also trend the results over a period of time.
- Prior to EMR, patient prescription refills took a great deal of time. The process could take a couple of days depending on when the call was received, chart was pulled, physician availability to review and time for the nurse to call it in. **"The prescription refill aspect of the EMR is so easy. I can complete the request, fax to the pharmacy and save to the patient chart in a matter of seconds,"** stated Richard Nielsen, M.D., president. With the use of laptops and access from home, many providers will complete their prescription refills and patient messages from home.
- **The EMR system has allowed the practice to eliminate the automated phone message system,** and patients have responded positively to once again hearing a real, live voice when calling the office. This modification was made possible by re-focusing resources to the front desk, enabling two staffers from billing to assist in that area.
- **The office staff has embraced the system because they love the messaging system and no longer search for lost charts.** Staff type the message or prescription refill, and with a click of the mouse, send it to the provider without having to locate a chart and physically take it to the provider. Their work areas have become neater and more orderly.
- As each existing patient's chart is fully entered into the EMR, their paper chart is then taken to the storage room. As each shelving compartment is emptied, it is removed. **"This has really been a visual booster to the staff. They are able to see how the EMR is impacting their work,"** said Deborah Gatrell, practice administrator.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Crystal Lake Health Center's adoption of HEALTHMATICS EMR has allowed the practice to focus more on patient care and less on administrative tasks. As the practice continues to become more familiar with the system, it will be able to take advantage of the various reporting features. Dr. Nielsen commented, "We expect to realize a significant return on investment from the eliminated transcription fees and increased staff productivity." He also noted, "The outcome will be a better managed practice that can continue to grow painlessly because of this efficiently integrated system. I could never go back to the old way of doing things."