

CASE STUDY

ATLANTA WOMEN'S SPECIALISTS, ATLANTA & ALPHARETTA, GA



HEALTHMATICS® EMR
ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORD

PRACTICE PROFILE

Type of Practice/Specialty	Obstetrics and Gynecology
Go-Live Date	April 2002
Number of Locations	2
Number of Physicians	6 Physicians + 3 Nurse Practitioners
Number of Employees	42
Patient Volume	38,500 annual encounters
PM Vendor/Interface	Quick Recovery by General Systems Design Inc.
Lab Vendor/Interface	Quest Diagnostics® Lab Information Systems, Genzyme Genetics & Northside Hospital



- **Lab interface with local hospital**
- **Broad efficiencies**
- **Dramatically improved workflow**

"By making investment in technology a priority, we've been able to cut our staffing by 20%. Our employees are now more productive and they know it. They really appreciate how technology has changed their jobs for the better. Ask any of them; each will tell you that working with electronic charts is far superior to working with paper charts."

Paul Barry, AWS practice administrator.

SEEKING THE BEST SOLUTION

Atlanta Women's Specialists (AWS) logs between 120 and 150 patients per day, accounting for nearly 15,000 obstetric and 23,500 gynecological visits each year. The process toward an EMR began approximately six years ago and progressed incrementally with intermittent technology deployments as simple as Microsoft® Outlook, priming providers and staff for a complete information technology solution.

Since patients can be seen at either of AWS' two locations, integral pieces of the paper charts were often faxed between offices. Eventually, the frustration with this process hit a crescendo and the practice was ready for an EMR. The practice selected A⁴ Health Systems® HealthMatics® EMR because it was the only solution available that enabled the practice to manage the patient process and control workflow as desired.

"Our physicians were not exceptionally comfortable with electronic technology, so easing them into using an email solution to submit something as simple as a vacation request was their first true foray into the world of technology. The A⁴ system is so intuitive that my entire staff took to the solution surprisingly quickly," commented Paul Barry, AWS practice administrator.

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LOOKING AHEAD

The practice has several technology upgrades in the progress, including creating ways for patients and providers to communicate electronically more efficiently. AWS recently opened an Internet Café and plans to utilize it to introduce patients to A⁴'s HealthMatics® Access. HealthMatics Access offers patients a secure access to practice services via the Web. The practice expects to benefit from fewer phone inquiries, as well as the ability to provide faster service and improved patient satisfaction.

AWS also plans to upgrade its practice management system to incorporate electronic billing. The current practice management system is not HL7 compliant, so billing is still done on paper. AWS looks forward to being completely paperless.

COUNTING THE BENEFITS

Improving documentation – Providers at AWS previously hand wrote all documentation into the charts. This time-consuming process often created challenges with handwriting as well as interpreting the often-confusing abbreviations created by individual physicians. HealthMatics EMR has greatly improved the quality and completeness of documentation, and as an added benefit, the entire patient chart is available electronically at both offices, which has improved patient care.

Connecting the healthcare community – The practice delivers approximately 85 babies per month at Northside Hospital, making good communication between the hospital and AWS an integral piece of the practice. As a result of the open architecture of the EMR and the efforts of connectivity vendor Novo Innovations, lab results, pathology reports, radiology reports, hospital discharge summaries and operative reports are directly populated into the EMR. The interface eliminates time spent waiting for couriers and greatly improves the quality of documents that were previously sent via fax. This hospital-to-medical-group connectivity is rare in today's healthcare environment and is highly sought after by many medical practices.

"As a practitioner, it is important for me to be able to provide lab results as quickly and accurately as possible. The EMR coupled with direct connectivity to the hospital and lab systems often enables me to report on a mammogram a day or two after the test, as opposed to the week or two it used to take," commented Dr. Yvette Smith.

Maximizing efficiency – AWS has been able to reduce staff by approximately 20 percent due to efficiencies delivered by the EMR. Ultimately, the EMR enables more work to be done without additional burden. Now, neither staff nor physicians are routinely saddled with staying in the office after hours to document charts or sift through refill requests.

Physicians also have the convenience of accessing records from home via a secure VPN connection. This feature allows them to stay current with their work and enables them to review and update charts after hours – an especially useful tool when they are on-call and need to fax an H&P to the hospital for a patient they are admitting.

Streamlining workflow – One of the most profound changes attributable to the EMR is the ability to process information quickly and efficiently. At any given time, the practice used to have as many as 20 staff looking for paper charts, which sometimes took weeks to find. With A⁴'s HealthMatics EMR, time is not wasted searching for charts.

"HealthMatics EMR has dramatically improved our workflow from the most basic task to the most complex. For example, the time wasted searching for charts is no longer an issue. The charts are always available when we need them – and since we have two locations – wherever we need them. Previously, we had to rely on office staff to fax over what they thought was the most pertinent information. Overall, we are tremendously more efficient," commented Smith.

The benefit of immediate access to clinical information, although difficult to quantify in hours or dollars saved, is simply that providers are able to convey information more rapidly and with greater accuracy than the previous paper-based system – a tangible benefit for patients.