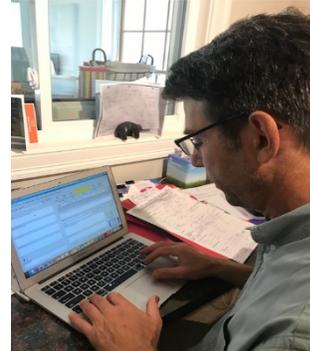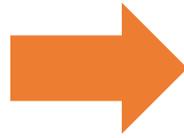# Time to Transition from Paper Charts

Tips for a Smooth Transition

2019 PetTracks – A Harris Healthcare Company

Time to Transition from Paper Charts to Electronic Records — Here's Why

Transitioning from paper charts to electronic medical records (EMR) offers veterinarians a variety of benefits and, with the current software available, making that change is easier than ever before. That said, it can still seem a bit overwhelming; however, preparing for this change by taking a team approach and working together is the best way to implement any new system. Once the implementation is complete, the benefits received will return the time spent learning the system, and more.

What are Electronic Medical Records?

Electronic medical records are digital records that are used to replace patients' paper records; thus, eliminating the need for bulky paper files. Once a patient's records are entered into the system, they can be accessed by the veterinarian and staff members at any time, and from anywhere an internet connection is available.

With the use of EMR, practices can provide pets and their parents with the highest quality of care available. Besides putting clients' minds at ease or providing them with direction (e.g., go to the nearest animal hospital), the ability to assist pet parents and access their pets' records at a time of concern will make it clear how much the practice cares.

Workflow Example in a Practice without an Electronic Medical Records Software System:

➢ Peanut has just been neutered and his mom calls in to see how he is doing. She is placed on hold while the receptionist attempts to reach the veterinarian or a vet tech to inquire as to Peanut's status. It takes several minutes to attain the information for Peanut's mom, which has led to a delay in helping other clients. This delay could very well cause the practice to run behind the rest of the day.

The Same Example with an EMR System:

➢ When an EMR system is in use, there is no need to hunt for the veterinarian or a vet tech because staff members can easily check on patients from their computers. With all the computers connected, once Peanut's surgical and recovery information is entered, the receptionist can quickly inform his mom

exactly when his surgery ended, how it went and where he is; thus, keeping the day running smoothly and helping the other clients in a timely manner.

Benefits of an EMR Software System

Improved Accuracy

Many times, paper-based records are riddled with errors because of illegible handwriting or incomplete documentation. Handwriting is not necessary when using an EMR system; therefore, illegibility is of no concern.

With EMR systems, pertinent information must be included on the form or the staff member will not be able to continue moving forward in the program; thus, eliminating concerns related to incomplete documentation. Furthermore, some electronic medical record software systems have edits that can be used to require staff members to add supplemental information when necessary (e.g., the reason for an injury).

Paper Files Require Physical Storage Space: Digital Files Do Not

Paper records take up a lot of space. These records are very important and must be maintained; however, switching over to digital records makes a big difference in the physical space available at a veterinary practice as well as the overall look of the reception area.

Paper Records are More Expensive than EMRs

While there is the initial cost of implementing an EMR system, once the system is up and running the costs associated with the electronic medical records system are less than those for paper records.

Consider that, with paper records, specific documents must be purchased and/or printed. In addition, more personnel are necessary to manage, maintain, access and file the paper charts.

Digital Medical Records Offer Versatility

Each pet patient's medical record can be maintained in the EMR software system in its entirety: Add notes, photos, lab results and signed forms to the patient record, all of which can be pulled up and referred to at any time.

EMRs Offer the Potential for Third-Party Vendors

If the EMR software integrates with third-party vendors, consider taking advantage of these benefits. Sending orders to third-party vendors from electronic medical records software offers a huge productivity boost.

Tips for a Smooth Transition from Paper Charts to an Electronic Medical Records Software System

The Practice's Technology Infrastructure Must Support the Goals

Most veterinary practices have more than one computer, which is ideal for an EMR system because it allows easy access to records no matter where a staff member is; however, to reach paperless goals, the practice's technology infrastructure must offer adequate support.

One important factor when it comes to support is the bandwidth. Check the bandwidth of the cabling used in the practice to make sure that it will not slow the system down (most new wiring is CAT5e).

Document Scanning, Simplified

Many practices use general-purpose scanners that have an automatic document feeder to scan documents into their systems. Also, for the sake of efficiency, some of these practices find it beneficial to schedule a scanning session a couple of times a week. During these sessions they scan patients' outside reports into their files. These weekly sessions make adding patients' results (labs, emergency reports, etc.) to their charts a quick and easy task.

Check Out All the Available Options

Underutilization is one of the main problems for veterinarians when it comes to using an EMR system. Using the software to its fullest potential offers an array of benefits. For this reason, it is important that the veterinarian spend some time talking with the vendor about what he or she is looking for in

an electronic medical records system. For example, since veterinarians frequently deal with injured animals, the ability to upload pictures of these injuries into patient's files would be beneficial.

Ask What Other Veterinarians Find Useful

Make sure to ask the vendor what other veterinarians are finding useful at their clinics. Some practices may opt for a free-form approach, while others prefer to use a template: Both of these options have their own advantages and disadvantages. Vendors know their products and can help veterinarians determine which options will serve their practices the best.

The Template Option

Prior to committing to any template or the template option in general, try out a variety of them on pets of family friends, staff members, breeders and the humane society. By doing this before implementing the electronic medical records software system, tweaks can be made to ensure a smoother transition.

Have Realistic Expectations

If learning new features seems overwhelming, just tackle one feature at a time. Pick one of the features that affects the practice's productivity the most. Set it up and then move along to the next option.

Train Vital Staff Members First

The training process takes approximately six months. If training is offered by the software company, take advantage of it. If not, start off working with a few of the practice's vital staff members (e.g., managers, vet techs, etc.). Work together to create test templates. Once these templates are created, begin training the other staff members.

Begin Training with a Staff Member's Responsibilities in Mind

Train each member on the functions that he or she would use the most. For example, the receptionist makes the appointments; therefore, he or she would be trained on how to make those appointments using the new system.

Training this way helps the staff remain positive about the new system because they see the benefits immediately. Once the appointment book is understood, another task can be explored; for example, patient records.

Appoint an In-House Information Technology Person

The in-house information technology person must be familiar with the EMR system. It is true that EMRs will need more oversight than was typically required with paper records; however, glitches can easily be fixed by staff members who are familiar with the way the EMR system works.

Emergency Power

Even when the electric company is experiencing technical difficulties, a practice with emergency power in place will still have all of its computers, lights, telephones, and lab equipment up and running. Choosing a generator that automatically starts when the electricity fails is ideal; however, since there is a slight delay in the generator starting up, having the practice's main computer and the server on a backup battery (which typically provides about 15 minutes of power) keeps everything running smoothly despite the outage.

Have a Backup Plan in Place

Make sure your EMR or your IT department has an offsite back-up solution to protect you data. Backups can now be stored to the cloud for easy access to restore your data in case of an emergency. Backing up data routinely is a good way to make sure in the event the unthinkable happens, the practice's records are all safe and unaffected. Your EMR vendor can help with creating a plan for disaster recovery.

How to Start the Scanning Process

Start the scanning process with the records of the pets that are being seen in the upcoming week. Once those are all scanned, begin scanning the remainder of the patient records alphabetically. Once a paper is scanned, it must be filed so it can be placed in storage.

Remain Patient during the Transition

Every record will not be scanned into the new EMR system overnight. Depending on the size of the practice, veterinarians should expect it to take several months or even a year to complete the entire scanning process.

PetTracks EVMR

Introducing PetTracks, powered by Amazing Charts, a low cost, intuitive, user friendly EVMR (Electronic Veterinary Medical Records System), designed to mimic a paper chart. PetTracks has proven to significantly reduce your check out process and streamline your workflow allowing you to see more patients and gain more hours back in your day.

PetTracks offers an Electronic Medical Record solution that is designed specifically for veterinarians. We take pride in helping our clients learn how to utilize the many benefits of our software. PetTracks can make a huge difference in the efficiency of your veterinary practice and the level of care you can provide to your pet patients and their parents. Furthermore, once paper files are eliminated, the overall costs associated with running your practice will decline. Stay a step ahead of the rest and contact PetTracks today.

Our company provides self-directed training, personalized training, online webinars and in-depth Customer Support for all aspects of program implementation and utilization.

Regardless of your practice type PetTracks will:

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- Streamline your practice workflow
- Increase your practice efficiency and profitability

Contact PetTracks today for further information, or visit [PetTracks](#) to request a complimentary personalized demonstration.

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