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Have Transformed Duluth
Pediatrician Jeffrey Cooper's Practice

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How Electronic Medical Records Have Transformed Duluth Pediatrician Jeffrey Cooper's Practice

By Helen K. Kelley

Duluth pediatrician Jeffrey Cooper has a thriving practice with patients who come from not only Gwinnett County, but from all over north Georgia. With more than 14,000 charts on file after 11 years in practice, Dr. Cooper and his staff know the value of running an efficient operation.

Although Cooper's "extender" staff is relatively small—consisting of two nurse practitioners and one physician's assistant—they can easily manage the large numbers of patients they see in a day due, in large part, to the use of an electronic medical records (EMR) system. The EMR technology has enabled Cooper Pediatrics to streamline its operations, while maintaining accuracy and completeness of patient records.

Cooper decided to implement an EMR system in 1995, after viewing a demonstration by JMJ Technologies, an Atlanta-based software firm (see sidebar). "I really wasn't looking for an EMR,"

he says. "At the time, the technology was brand new and we didn't know much about it."

Representatives from JMJ Technologies visited Cooper's office and ran a product demonstration for him. The demo was so impressive that Cooper immediately asked to try out the software on a "virtual" patient record.

"They opened up a chart for me, and then I entered the patient's complete physical exam information, made the diagnosis, chose four different prescription drugs and closed the chart—all of which I completed in less than 30 seconds!" exclaims Cooper. "Normally, I could have charted the child's record in about a minute, but I still would have had to write out the four prescriptions by hand. There was no way I could have charted the child's encounter on paper in less than two minutes."

Cooper realized that by eliminating time-consuming handwritten



While in the exam room, Dr. Cooper can order vaccines by recording them electronically. His message is sent instantaneously to his staff. "Frequently, by the time I'm finished with the child's physical and have closed the chart, the nurse is waiting outside the exam room with the vaccines I requested." At left: Dr. Cooper examines nine-year-old Austin Brooks of Dacula.

JMJ Technologies Atlanta, GA

JMJ Technologies, Inc. is the manufacturer of EncounterPRO, an EMR system used by a variety of physicians in different specialties, including Dr. Jeffrey Cooper of Cooper Pediatrics.

JMJ, established in 1994, has experienced phenomenal sales growth, according to Jim Copenhaver, CEO. "We've maintained an average growth rate of 76 percent for the last four years," he says. "We serve clients regionally, nationally, and even internationally. Nationally, we have sites in 28 states managing over two million patient records."

EncounterPRO's unique characteristics and documented clinical and financial benefits have made it one of the most award-winning EMRs in the industry. JMJ currently serves the following specialties: Cardiology, Family Practice, Internal Medicine, OB/GYN, Pediatrics, Ophthalmology and Dermatology.

EncounterPRO's features and advantages include:

- Unique user interface
- Integrated workflow management system
- Touch-screen technology
- Ability to configure/customize the progress of screens and services
- Ability to prioritize tasks
- Open architecture allows for easy integration of third-party devices, content, connectivity and application software

The technology's workflow management characteristics are particularly noteworthy. "EncounterPRO offers a workflow management system that automates the physician's office and allows the physicians themselves to configure the computer processes to suit the workflow of their office," explains Copenhaver. "This system saves enormous time in the office and creates much greater efficiencies."

JMJ's EMR is one of the easiest to learn, easiest to implement and most cost-effective technologies on the market today. Like Dr. Cooper, most physicians who have implemented the system have reported increases in patient visits per day, along with decreases in charting time, prescription refill turnaround time and interoffice communication time.

A JMJ research study of multiple primary care practices using JMJ's EMR showed the following averages: billing increased by 35.5 percent, patient visit charges increased by 23.7 percent, the number of patient visits per day increased by 31 percent, charting time decreased by 54 percent, phone message turnaround time decreased by 61.2 percent, and refill turnaround time decreased by 61.9 percent.

For more information, contact JMJ Technologies, Inc. at (770) 919-7220 or (800) 677-5653, or visit the company's Web site, www.jmjtech.com.

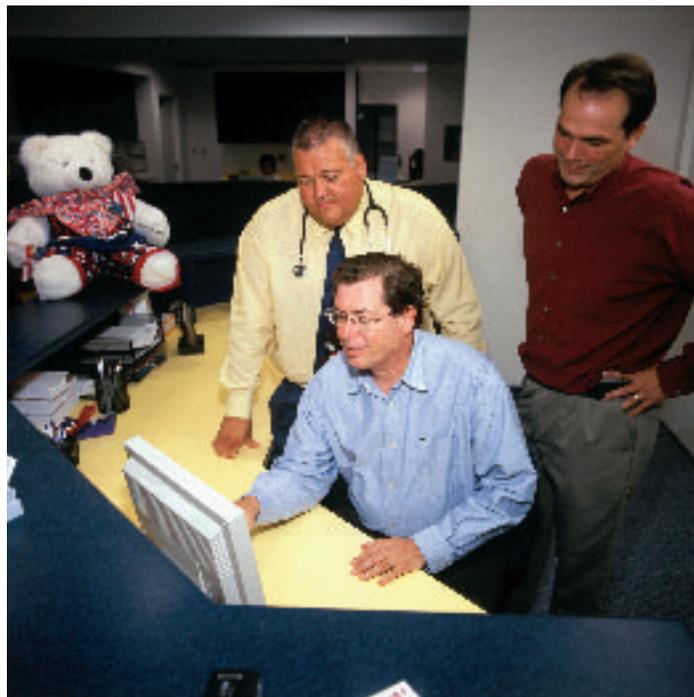


PHOTO BY LELAND HOLDER

Chuck Webster, M.D. (seated), Vice President of Medical Informatics at JMJ Technologies, admires how Dr. Cooper has customized JMJ's EncounterPRO to support the way he wants to run his business. Standing behind him from left to right, Dr. Jeffrey Cooper and Tom Forsberg, Vice President of Sales for JMJ Technologies.

notes, the software could save him enough time to see an additional 10 or more patients each day. "I was seeing about six patients an hour on a busy day, and that was with two nurses supporting me," he says. "Now, say, in the height of flu season, I can see eight to 10 an hour, depending on certain variables."

Increased Efficiency

The benefits of EMR technology include not only the potential for increased revenues, but also the ability to customize and streamline day-to-day operations.

"I've discovered so many more efficiencies created by the software that I didn't recognize in that first demonstration," explains Cooper. "Things like never losing a patient's chart. We never have to look for a medical record anymore; all of our records are right at our fingertips in our computer system."

In addition, the EMR system has improved the interoffice communication that goes on through a patient's medical record. When Cooper is in the exam room with a patient, he can now order vaccines by recording them electronically, and the message is immediately relayed to one of the nurses in the lab. "Frequently, by the time I'm finished with the child's physical and have closed his or her chart, the nurse is waiting outside the exam room with the vaccines I requested," says Cooper. "We waste less time on things like that, and we're able to turn over the exam rooms much faster, too."

Another advantage to the electronic system is its provision of accurate summary information. The technology keeps track of vaccine lot numbers and maintains an open problem list, open drug list and vaccination records for each patient. While physicians may have difficulty



EncounterPRO's large, colorful, easy-to-hit buttons simplify entry of patient data, diagnoses, and orders to staff.

maintaining those lists on paper, the technology does it automatically.

EMR technology can also drastically reduce the amount of paperwork most medical practices generate and store.

Cooper says that implementing the software completely changed the face of his office—from cluttered to neat. “We had about 3,600 patient charts when we installed JMJ’s EMR system,” he says. “The first thing we did was to scan or key in all of our vaccine data. Then, for the next six months, we pulled the paper records on our patients as they came in to see us, and I’d key their pertinent information, such as patient history, problem lists and referrals, into the computer.” After six months, Cooper says his staff stopped bringing the paper records into the exam rooms, only pulling one occasionally if needed. Eventually, when they noticed they weren’t pulling paper records out anymore, the old charts were archived and stored off-site.

“Now, when other physicians come to visit my practice, I usually hear compliments on both how uncluttered and how quiet our office is,” states Cooper.

Cooper is especially proud of the level of accuracy he is now able to maintain in his patients’ records. “Keying in all of our vaccine data in the beginning was crucial,” he says. “I have really excellent vaccine rates—higher than 99 percent for all of my two-year-olds. And I can prove it, because I can pull up the data on the computer.”

TECHNOLOGY THAT SAVES LIVES

Cooper notes that another important advantage of EMR technology is its ability to identify and help prevent potentially catastrophic events. For example, he mentions an incident in which a manufacturer sent out letters to physicians notifying them of a bad lot number on a tetanus vaccine.

“If you were using paper records, it would be a nightmare to track

down all of the children you might have given the bad vaccine,” Cooper explains. “When I got the notification, I immediately called JMJ Technologies and explained the problem. The customer support representative was able to run a search on my records and identify the 26 patients who’d received the bad vaccine. She emailed the file to me—while I was still on the phone with her!” Cooper was then able to notify these patients that they needed to come in for a new tetanus booster.

Even more critical is when a drug is labeled as dangerous and taken off the market. EMR technology can enable a doctor to immediately identify patients who are taking that particular drug and notify them to stop taking it. Again, if records are maintained on paper, physicians must expend time and energy in locating the targeted patients, and also run the risk of not identifying all of them.

EASE OF OPERATION

Cooper notes that the software has been exceptionally easy to use, even for people who have only basic typing skills.

“This requires very little use of the keyboard. Most of it is touch-screen operation,” he explains. “For example, when our nurses take the patient’s chief complaints, there is a pick-list of the most common symptoms, such as fever, ear pain or sore throat. The nurse can enter the symptoms and how long the child’s had them, as well as any pertinent negatives, just by touching the screen.” Only if an item isn’t included on the pick-list or requires more documentation does someone have to actually type in the information.

In addition, JMJ’s EMR system gives the physician the option to dictate his remarks, which can either be recorded as an audio file on the patient’s chart or delivered to a transcriptionist, who can transcribe the notes right into the medical record.

Training new or temporary users of the system is very simple, according to Cooper. “When I’ve had PRN nursing staff come in, I log them onto the system as a user with their own code, and then give them about a 20-minute orientation on how to use it,” he says. “I’ve had nurses who actually asked if they could come work for me after using it!”

NO GOING BACK

Working to update patient charts after hours is a thing of the past. “I’m done every day by 4:30 p.m.,” Cooper states. “I have no dictation to do, no charts to sign. It’s already been done as the patients are seen.” He adds that he is also able to quickly review and update the charts submitted by the nurse practitioners and physician’s assistant each day. “And when we’re done for the day, there aren’t stacks of charts to be filed,” he says.

After using EMR technology for more than eight years now, Cooper says he can’t conceive of ever returning to maintaining patient records on paper.

Although there is a significant investment for the technology upfront, in Dr. Jeffrey Cooper’s case it has paid for itself several times over. “A lot of people will tell you that they can’t afford to purchase an EMR,” he marvels. “And I just want to say to them, ‘You can’t afford not to!’” ■