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September 24, 2010


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TECHNOLOGICAL AID

AF resident gets physicians into digital age



By **JOSH SNYDER**
SPECIAL TO AFN

In this digital age, many physicians' offices are still managing their records under a paper filing system. One Ahwatukee Foothills resident is working to usher these offices into modern times.

Margaret Blue, a 20-year resident of Ahwatukee and president of Total EMR Solutions, is behind the recent launch of the company's DemoLab, which aims to assist physicians in selecting medical record software for their offices.

EMR, which stands for electronic medical record, software is an alternative to the traditional filing and records system many offices use. Offices utilizing EMR store their records electronically, which streamlines the process, Blue said.

"I realized that EMR decisions are complicated and that doctors don't always have unbiased voices talking to them about those decisions," Blue said.



Total EMR's DemoLab allows physicians to test electronic medical record software before selecting a brand. (Above, from left) Jennifer Tumlinson, Margaret Blue and John R. Hale.

According to a press release by the company, only about 40 percent of physician offices have EMR software. Medical record software can cost more than \$100,000 for practices of two or three physicians. Although the federal government is currently

providing between \$44,000 to \$64,000 in cash incentives to physicians using an EMR system, such software is still costly and making a selection that works best for each office can be difficult and time consuming.

For doctors electing to go digital, selecting the right EMR product can't be taken lightly, Blue said.

"Short of 'who's going to be my clinical partner,' this is probably the next biggest decision," she said.

Total EMR Solutions aims to make the decision easier while removing the natural marketing bias that accompanies going straight to the vendors, Blue said.

MORE EMR • PAGE 25

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Medical theories, practices change with time

Since the dawn of time, man has had to deal with illness, disease, recovery and death; that will never change.

However, medical theories and practices do change. I have been privileged to witness many changes in the practice of medicine and nursing. Nurses no longer wear starched white uniforms and caps and doctors no longer are expected to take Wednesdays off to play golf. Nurses are now in the front lines of health care as independent medical providers of care in all aspects of medicine whether it is in primary care or specialties like cardiology, neurology or oncology, etc.

It is not that I am that old; rather, changes are occurring at lightening speed. For example, skin adhesive for the treatment of minor lacerations has been

available only within the last few years. Ten years ago, if you had sustained a superficial laceration you would have demanded to speak to a surgeon if the ER doc had made the loony suggestion of closing your wound with glue. But today, savvy and informed patients actually request skin adhesive.

The why of illness and disease, or etiology, has also changed. The discovery of germs and viruses in the 19th century finally put to rest the notion of evil spirits and "bad humours" as the cause of afflictions. Recently, other causes are coming to light, namely

complex psychoneuroimmunologic causes and genetic etiologies. Religion also has influenced the evolution of medicine and continues to do so. During the middle ages, the quest for medical knowledge

was restrained because of the ban on dissection and autopsy. However, the care of the sick and infirm owes much to the early monasteries and religious orders that established the forerunners of hospitals.

In an ironic twist, medical advancements owe much to warfare. There are accounts of Gladiators in Roman times relying on primitive skin grafts to wounds and crude iron prosthetics in Medieval times for soldiers; all for the sole purpose of returning the combatants to the front lines. Most of us are aware how World War II provided the impetus for rapid development of antibiotics. What advancements will we be the recipients of as a result of current conflicts?

Nature has always been intricately intertwined with illness and healing. Pre-historic man knew which plants and herbs to use to his benefit and which to

avoid. Even today, many medicines have their origins in nature; aspirin, digitalis, morphine, quinine, cyclosporine and vinblastine are a few that come to mind.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Persons who are ill, diseased or dying are no different today than 100 years ago or 1,000 years ago or a millennium ago. We may have different theories and different treatments in the 21st century; what will always remain constant, however, is the need to bring humanness and caring to the patient's bedside.

Agnes Oblas, APRN, is a certified adult nurse practitioner. Her primary care practice, New Paths to Healthcare, LLC, is in Ahwatukee Foothills, 13838 S. 46th Place, Suite 340. Reach her at aoblas@newpathshealth.com or (602) 405-6320.



By **AGNES OBLAS**
SPECIAL TO AFN

EMR FROM PAGE 24

"It seems like such an obvious solution," she said. "But nobody else is doing this."

With DemoLab, physicians can use and test EMR software side by side, allowing them to compare products and determine the best choice for their office. Physicians are also educated on how each product works, so they have a clear understanding of what it can and can't do, said Jennifer Tumlinson, who helps manage Total EMR Solutions.

"If they're frustrated with the time they're spending with a product it's something they're going to have a problem with in the office," Tumlinson said.

Once they have narrowed down their choices, Total EMR Solutions introduces physicians to the appropriate vendors.

The selection process takes about two weeks. Without DemoLab, the average medical practice takes approximately 13 months to settle on an EMR system, Blue said.

Total EMR Solutions plans to open two additional DemoLabs in early 2011. From there, the company hopes to expand to the top 25 major metropolitan areas in the United States.

"We're waiting to make sure we have everything ironed out in the pilot site so that when we're ready to roll that will happen very rapidly, Tumlinson said. "The doctors in other major cities need it just as much as the doctors here locally, so we want to make sure that when we start up over there we start up ready to be able to serve."

Catholic Healthcare West's Urgent Care center in Ahwatukee Foothills uses EMR software to track its records. The software helps keep records legible as well as efficient, and provides a more complete medical record for patients, Site Director Jean Dorame said.

"Obviously, it's quicker to jot down a note on a piece of paper and tell someone just verbally instructions, but that's not in the patient's best interests," she said.

Using electronic records software is standard practice now, Dorame noted.

"If you're not electronic it's not safe care for your patients, it's not safe for the practice with documentation," she said. "It's so easy to recall your records."

Josh Snyder is interning this semester for the Ahwatukee Foothills News. He is a senior at Arizona State University.

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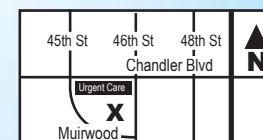
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WEIGHT
FROM PAGE 7

Take the weight off your shoulders

• Be honest about how the numbers affect you. If weighing yourself backfires, put your scale under the sink.

• You never need to weigh yourself more than once a day. If you do, you're playing games by measuring meaningless physiological fluctuations.

• Let go of old benchmarks. You may never again reach your wrestling or wedding day weight, but you can live an active lifestyle and make conscious choices that serve you now.

• Don't weigh yourself to confirm what you already know. When you've been mindful of your choices, don't take a chance that the scale will derail your confidence.

• Don't use the scale to punish yourself. When you know you're off track, focus on the changes you'll make rather than beating yourself up.

No weigh

A man I met at a conference recently said, "I don't need a scale; I have pants." Look for other ways to

assess your health and progress, too:

• Resting heart rate, blood pressure, cholesterol or fasting blood sugar.

• Minutes of walking, steps on your pedometer or pounds of weight you're able to lift.

• How do you feel? Tune in to your energy level, mood and stamina.

Ultimately, meaningful change takes place from the inside out.

Michelle May, M.D., is founder of the Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating Workshops (www.AmIHungry.com) that help individuals break free from



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