

**ELIMINATING**

the burdens of

**PAPER**

in your practice





Movies have taught us a couple indisputable things about secret agents like Jason Bourne. First, they are experts in hand-to-hand combat. Give them a paperclip or a rolled-up newspaper, and they'll take out a legion of bad guys.

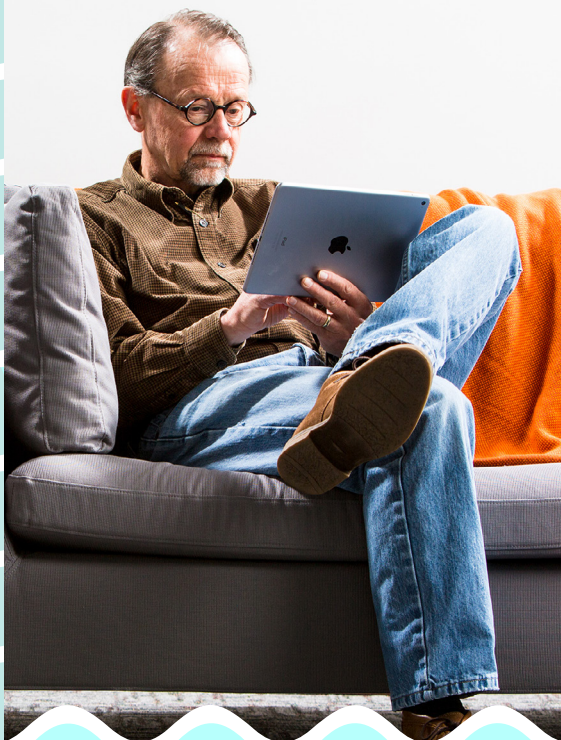
Second, they never use cash when paying for hotel rooms, rental cars or machine guns. Why no cash? Because the first thing they teach in spy school is to never leave a paper trail. And those who disregard this rule, using cash for a purchase or carrying around hard copies of important documents in their backpack, usually end up dead.

Like any good spy, you've probably gone paperless in a lot of areas of your personal life. Think about it. You pay your mortgage online. Ditto for your utility bills. There's a reason that millions of Americans handle these types of things electronically now—it's unbelievably convenient.

Also, relying on hard copies is risky. If you lose or misfile a paper document, that's all she wrote. The old adage "my dog ate my homework" doesn't work so well when it comes to bills, affidavits or deeds.

So, we've established that relying on paperwork has drawbacks. To recap:

- It's inconvenient
- It can get lost or damaged
- It can get you killed by a rival spy



# The (nearly) paperless practice.

If your practice is still clinging to hard copies, it's time to step out of the Dark Ages and into the light. Of course, your practice will never be entirely paperless. There will always be some records that exist on paper, not to mention Post-it notes all over the receptionist desk and toilet paper in the bathroom.

But it's crucial that you move your data into the electronic world and automate your processes. Going the digital route centralizes your practice's information and increases your efficiency. It simplifies your claims submittals, referrals and prescriptions. Data storage is easier because you won't

need to dedicate a large part of the office for paper filing. And because everything is more accessible, you'll have fewer issues with lost records (one analysis showed that 30% of paper medical records as "not found.")<sup>1</sup>

While going paperless is an investment, it offers lucrative returns. You'll notice small savings on a daily basis, such as reducing the cost of creating new charts or pulling a chart. But you'll also see a significant impact when it comes to one of the biggest boons to your practice: the boost to reimbursements.

**“The improved documentation with electronic records has been shown to improve accurate coding and reimbursement.”<sup>2</sup>**



# Start with an EHR.

Have you ever jumped into frigid water? It may provide an invigorating rush – courtesy of the adrenaline surge – but it's not necessarily good for your body. The abrupt approach can strain your heart and possibly even put you in danger.<sup>3</sup>

The better approach is to ease into it. Acclimate. The same can be said for the transition into the electronic realm.

A good place for your practice to start is with an EHR. Get comfortable with the input and storage of electronic data, working through the inevitable complications and finding solutions that you can apply in the future as you add more software products.

If you go with a proven solution like AdvancedEHR, you'll be amazed by its versatility and your newfound freedom. Your software will eliminate costs associated with paper charts and billing systems, maximize your billable services with electronic charge capture, chart multiple patient conditions simultaneously, send automated patient reminders, use specialty-specific ICD/CPT codes, provide immunization tracking and reporting, and manage and send prescriptions. And when you realize that you can do all this through the cloud on your iPhone, iPad or any other laptop or computer, you'll wonder why you didn't make the switch sooner.

With upgrades like these, your day-to-day routine suddenly begins to feel much less routine. As detailed in a federal report, EHRs can transform how you "collect, manage, store, use and share health information."<sup>4</sup> It's why 59% of physicians have made the switch.<sup>5</sup>

If your practice hasn't yet transitioned to EHR, set a date to have your office software up and running. It doesn't need to be an aggressive goal. Rather, give your staff time to get through the training and adjust to the new processes. 2018 will bring the EHR requirement for MACRA/MIPS, so you will want to be prepared well ahead of time.



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# Reduce your malpractice risk.

The rate of malpractice claims when EHRs were used was about one-sixth the rate when EHRs were not used.

When your processes are dependent on paper, they're often less accurate and reliable. The result can be a higher probability for a Medicare/CMS RAC audit and correspondingly higher malpractice insurance costs.

A Harvard Medical School study, titled "The Relationship Between Electronic Health Records and Malpractice Claims," found that implementation of EHRs has the potential to "reduce adverse events and health care costs."<sup>6</sup>

The study looked at common contributors to medical errors, such as poor communication, limited access to patient information and unsafe prescribing practices. And the conclusion the researchers came to was that all these factors are likely minimized by using an EHR. When push came to shove, the study "found that the rate of malpractice claims when EHRs were used was about one-sixth the rate when EHRs were not used."<sup>3</sup>





## Patients hate paper as much as you do.

Your hippie patients are opposed to your use of paper because it's wasteful and contributes to the demise of our planet's rainforests. And all your other patients, including those who drive Hummers and think recycling is a waste of time, also hate it because paper is inconvenient and decreases the quality of their care.

As long as you're stuck in the Dark Ages of Paper, it's less likely that you'll be able to provide automated appointment reminders. With a high-quality option like AdvancedReminders, you can greatly reduce your administrative burden and provide better continuity of care. Reminders are sent automatically and increase patient engagement, reducing your rate of no-shows and late arrivals.

There's an old saying that you can't please everyone, but that doesn't really apply here. If you transition away from clunky paper processes and implement tools that improve the patient experience, your patients will jump for joy.

For one thing, it will give them access to telemedicine and a secure patient portal. Your patients are probably anxious to tap into the freedom and versatility that comes from these self-help technologies. Telemedicine is particularly helpful for rural, housebound, or elderly patients with limited mobility. It delivers faster time to diagnosis and treatment, which results in better health outcomes and happier patients.<sup>7</sup>

Surveys reveal that 70% of patients feel comfortable communicating with healthcare providers online, and 80% have no problem submitting personal medical information online.<sup>8</sup> In fact, 80% of patients between the ages of 18-34 actually prefer to have their consultations via mobile device rather than face-to-face.<sup>9</sup>

And patient portals, well, they simply allow patient to take control of their healthcare in ways they've never before had – things like appointment scheduling, online bill pay, secure messaging and consuming patient education. They'll absolutely love you and may even call you "techy"!



## Conclusion

Paper is great for things like lost dog posters, concert fliers and origami. Not so much for storing patient data in a way that it's quickly and reliably accessible. And if you're still using paper in your practice, it's costing you time, money and patients.

"It's really been a long-term dream of mine to have an alternative to wood-based paper," Woody Harrelson once mused. "Over half of the trees cut in the world are cut for paper products."

By switching to integrated software products, you'll not only be helping Woody's dream come true, but you'll get a more efficient, profitable practice packed with happier patients. Sounds like a dream that we can all get behind.

Contact us today and we'll help you chart the best course for a paperless practice.

<sup>1</sup> American Medical Software benefit analysis.

<sup>2</sup> "Creating the Paperless Physician Office." Physicians Practice. May 30, 2016. <http://www.physicianspractice.com/technology/creating-paperless-physician-office>

<sup>3</sup> "Polar Bear Plunges: Are They Good for Your Health?" Time. January 16, 2013.

<http://healthland.time.com/2013/01/16/polar-bear-plunges-are-they-good-for-your-health/>

<sup>4</sup> Benefits for Critical Access Hospitals and Other Small Rural Hospitals. November 18, 2015.

[www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/benefits-critical-access-hospitals-and-other-small-rural-hospitals](http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/benefits-critical-access-hospitals-and-other-small-rural-hospitals)

<sup>5</sup> Physicians Practice Tech Report. July 18, 2016.

<http://imaging.ubmmmedica.com/all/editorial/physicianspractice/pdfs/PDFTechSurvey16.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Docs who used EHRs showed lower malpractice claims."

Healthcare IT News. June 26, 2012.

<http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/docs-who-used-ehrs-showed-lower-malpractice-claims>

<sup>7</sup> Richardson, Lisa K., et al. "Current Directions in Videoconferencing Tele-Mental Health Research." Clinical Psychology: a Publication of the Division of Clinical Psychology of the American Psychological Association 16(3), 2009.

<http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2850.2009.01170.x>

<sup>8</sup> Insight Express. "Cisco Customer Experience Report for Healthcare." February 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Mordor Intelligence. "Global Telemedicine Market: Growth, Trends, and Forecasts (2015-2020)". August 2015.