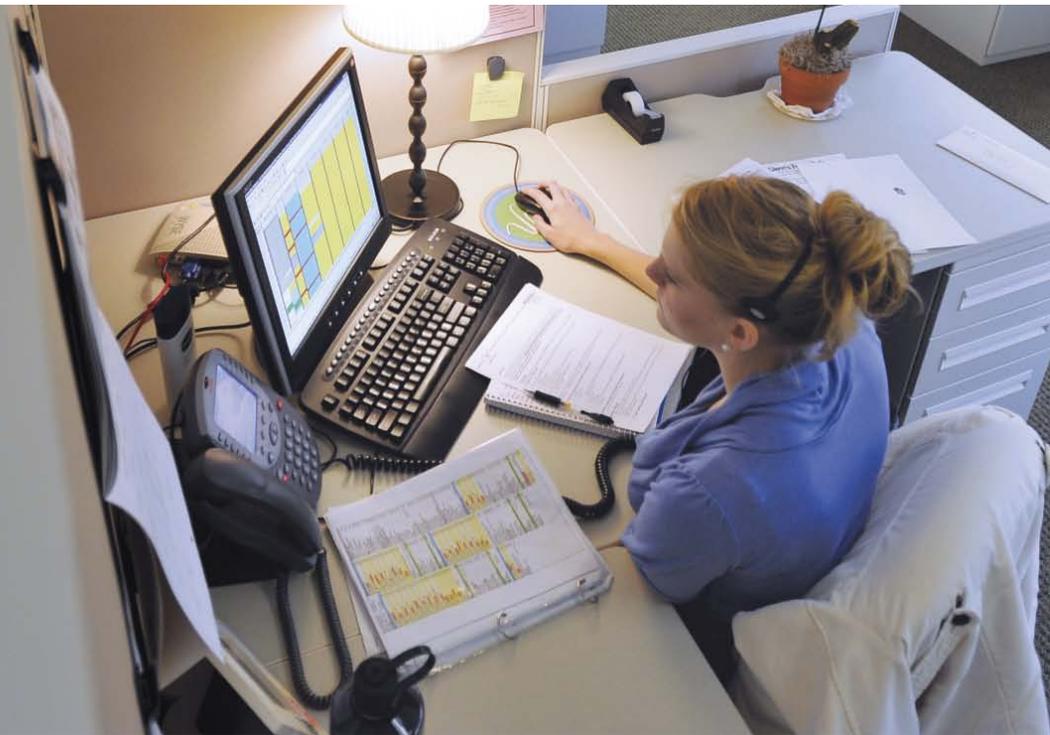


# Embracing efficiency



Centricity Practice Solution helps Virginia Women's Center streamline workflow, enhance patient care, and enjoy an impressive return on investment.

#### The story in a nutshell

In 2005, Virginia Women's Center (VWC) selected GE Healthcare's Centricity Practice Solution to manage a growing patient population and increased complexity in the field of medicine. Since then, the practice has experienced not only a solid ROI, but also:

- Exceptional efficiencies across workflows
- Reductions in medical errors
- Fast notification of patients impacted by issues such as drug or medical product recalls
- Easy identification of patients eligible for opportunities such as clinical research studies
- Patient portal usage rates of up to 80 percent

Bottom line: an electronic patient-management solution that is making significant contributions to the well-being of patients and the practice alike.



## Centricity Practice Solution helps Virginia Women's Center cope with its growing pains

Virginia Women's Center (VWC) is an organization whose leadership has always kept an eye on the big picture, anticipating issues and seeking out solutions before those issues have become problems. And there's no better example of this foresight than its quest for the Electronic Medical Record (EMR), launched in 1996 to help the staff manage expansions in both service portfolio and patient population.

Kay Stout, MD, MBA, Managing Partner and Clinical Informatics Director, explained their motives. "As dedicated as we were to excellence in patient care, quality and safety," she said, "we could no longer rationalize our concerns over the increasingly onerous chart burden that was accompanying our growth. We had addressed legibility in transcription, but were still facing slow turnaround time, high costs and limited chart access."

It took Dr. Stout and her colleagues a long time to find the right combination of capabilities, development plans and vendor financial stability.

"It wasn't until 2003 that we found the functionality we needed in GE's Centricity platform. It met all our criteria – including the potential for interfacing with other lab, hospital and imaging systems. We began by implementing the Centricity Practice Management Module that same year. In 2005, we added Centricity EMR, and then in 2011 migrated both modules to Centricity Practice Solution."

Today, Centricity Practice Solution (CPS) is the backbone of the practice's patient-management system, driving major efficiencies across the organization through these three components:

- The EMR Module is responsible for everything from clinical notes, orders and reports to gathering information from provider, imaging and lab resources
- The Practice Management Module handles the practice's billing and scheduling tasks
- Centricity Patient Portal manages a wide array of patient communications

With these capabilities in place, VWC is enjoying a number of critical advantages.

"It met all our criteria – including the potential for interfacing with other lab, hospital and imaging systems."



**Kay Stout, MD, MBA**  
*Managing Partner and  
Clinical Informatics Director  
Virginia Women's Center*

## VWC Wins the Davies Award

In recognition of its outstanding achievement in implementing health information technology, Virginia Women's Center was named the 2009 winner of the HIMSS Nicholas E. Davies Award of Excellence in Ambulatory Care.

"Our practice decisions have always been strictly guided by the question, 'What is best for the patient?'" said Dr. Stout. "We continue to raise the bar for ourselves in patient care, education, safety, customer service and workflow efficiencies. Adopting electronic health records has been a successful means to that end; it's truly gratifying for our efforts to be recognized."

## Streamlining workflow

For this growing practice, CPS's most obvious benefit is the exceptional efficiency that now characterizes its day-to-day operations.

That's in large part because of the distinctive flexibility that has been built into this system. It allows users to customize their workflows to address the unique requirements of their specialties and their practices.

"This was very important to us," said Clinical Applications Director Wesley Ralston. "First of all, we had already expanded our services beyond traditional obstetrics and gynecology, so we needed a system capable of growing with us. Secondly, we didn't want to be forced to adapt to a software designer's idea of the ideal workflow; we wanted a system that would adapt to our ideal workflows."

"CPS met both of these requirements. It's given us the flexibility and the tools we need to customize workflows to fit our practice needs and preferences."

As a result, VWC's system includes such custom-tailored women's health tools as these:

- An obstetrics flowsheet form that mimics the old paper flowsheet, providing quick electronic access to current data, data from each patient's last 11 visits, plus information on up to 18 previous pregnancies
- An innovative pregnancy data summary that automatically pulls relevant information into one convenient document for faxing to the hospital
- A manageable package of relatively few, very modifiable forms to streamline data entry, help providers reduce medical errors and support clinical decision-making

In many ways, VWC's implementation of this system is a study in careful planning and attention to detail. With good reason, as Ralston pointed out, even small improvements can add up to significant workflow enhancements.

"That's why we took the time to develop the proper tools for our users," she said. "For instance, we created custom forms and macros to help ensure quick, consistent documentation of office visits and common procedures like colposcopies and endometrial biopsies. In addition, we took advantage of the Automated Clinical Messaging solution, which generates and sends clinical visit summaries to patients via secure message as soon as a provider has signed off on an office visit."



### What's in it for patients?

No one benefits more from this system than the practice's patients.

"Centricity Practice Solution keeps all our patient information under one roof, easily accessible to any provider on our team," said Ralston. "When a patient has a pressing medical need, it does not matter if the provider caring for her is at any of our five clinical locations, in the hospital or on call at home. He or she has access to the patient's entire medical chart. This enables any provider at VWC to offer all patients a higher quality of care, whether there is an existing patient-provider relationship or this is the first interaction they've had."

There's no need to transfer paper records, she said, no need to cover old territory, no need for a patient to remember details that don't seem pertinent but really are, and usually no need to search for reports from outside specialists. "It's all there, presented in a format that all our providers and clinical staff understand."

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**Wesley Ralston**  
Clinical Applications Director  
Virginia Women's Center

### Safety first

Patient safety is of course paramount at VWC – a concern that's reflected in the organization's application of Centricity tools.

One example: the system's weekly Patient Safety Application, which flags any time-sensitive tests or treatments that have yet to be administered or acted upon.

"Say, for instance, that an RH negative patient did not receive RhoGAM at 28 weeks," Ralston said. "The Patient Safety Application flags such omissions and sends timely reminders to the provider. At the same time, the system provides quality assurance data on our adherence to universal best practices, such as antepartum compliance with genetic test offerings."

What's more, this approach works without the "alert fatigue" that can result when a user is subjected to constant electronic reminders, like those non-stop upgrade alerts that we all see on our home PCs. "It doesn't take long for most people to begin ignoring those alerts," she said, "which defeats their purpose. Our system avoids this problem without letting anything critical slip through the cracks."

### Patient identification

CPS also makes it easy for the practice to respond promptly and accurately to issues such as drug or medical product recalls, according to Dr. Stout. For instance, she described a situation in which a lab vendor recalled the reagents used in Group B Streptococcal culturing.

"The fear was that the reagents might have resulted in inappropriately excluding some mothers from prophylaxis," she said, "and that might have put their babies at risk of early-onset neonatal sepsis, pneumonia, meningitis and possibly death. Fortunately, as soon as we were notified of the recall, we were able to identify the affected women, and establish a mechanism for repeating the cultures. There's no doubt that CPS played a major role in identifying affected patients for our response and supporting VWC's success in responding quickly for our patients."

Similarly, the system is contributing to VWC's clinical research program.

"Patients who are willing to participate in studies can be instantly identified according to traits such as age, medication and diagnosis," Dr. Stout said. "We can then contact them easily when suitable studies are initiated. It gives qualified patients access to high-quality health care at no cost, and gives them the opportunity to contribute to evidence-based medicine."

Because Centricity Practice Solution allows such unobtrusive recruitment from a large patient base, she added, the practice has become a sought-after independent research site.

### 70-80 percent portal participation

No, that's not a typo. As incredible as it may seem, 70 to 80 percent of VWC's patients regularly turn to its Patient Portal to get prompt notifications of lab and test results, schedule appointments, request prescription refills, update, view and download medical summaries and even message the staff.

"Our utilization rates are impressive," admitted Marketing Director Kate Mendez, "considering that the nationwide utilization average for such portals is around 30 percent. I think we've made a good case for the benefits of this offering – especially the fact that it allows each patient to access, download and even print her own personal health record whenever she likes."

Mendez believes that the popularity of the VWC portal is a reflection of a fundamental shift in the culture.

"A generation ago, patients simply did what their doctors told them to do. Today, we've become informed consumers who insist on taking control of our own healthcare. By providing secure access to all records, including everything from gynecology to urology, from diagnostic results to medications, our portal is helping the majority of our practice's patients do just that."

VWC patients seem to be delighted with all these capabilities, Dr. Stout said.

"From what we hear, they feel that their medical and personal information is much more secure since our EMR implementation. And we repeatedly hear about their satisfaction with faster turnaround time on prescription refills, medical-record transfers and notification of test results."

"When we planned our implementation of this system, we braced ourselves for a 10 to 15 percent decrease in productivity. But instead, we've experienced a fantastic return on our investment."

**Kay Stout, MD, MBA**  
*Managing Partner and  
Clinical Informatics Director  
Virginia Women's Center*

### An enviable ROI

Such advantages are all well and good. But without an equally satisfactory return on investment, the electronic health record would have no future in this country.

Fortunately, CPS has delivered just that for Virginia Women's Center.

"When we planned our implementation of this system, we braced ourselves for a 10 to 15 percent decrease in productivity," said Dr. Stout. "But instead, we've experienced a fantastic return on our investment."

Because VWC was adding new services and staff at the same time that CPS was implemented, she said, it's difficult to separate direct EMR benefits and costs from the overall dynamics of a changing medical practice.

"However, a broad global view of our financial metrics shows much success. The implementation year resulted in level profitability without the anticipated decrease. And in the year post-implementation, we experienced a 19 percent growth in profitability – a level that the Medical Group Management Association ranks well above the 75th percentile."

VWC's receivables cycle has also remained excellent at an average of 22 days for insurance payments, said Leah Lipscomb, Business Office Director. "Good processes are key, of course, and we've spent years building them. But Centricity Practice Solution has made it easy for us to implement those processes."

For example, Lipscomb said, it's simple to move around within Centricity Practice Solution's billing and EMR components. "The Business Office can quickly review and 'scrub' the patient record to make sure we have our billing information in order up front. And if a claim is denied, we can just as easily access all the data we need to make the appeal."

### The right choice

Implementing EMR was not an entirely painless process, Dr. Stout said. But the practice has enjoyed great success with this technology, thanks to careful planning, proper system selection and customization, a phased roll-out strategy, the establishment of an EMR Helpdesk for application support, and outstanding training before, during and after going live with the system.

Would the practice's EMR team recommend CPS to other organizations?

"Definitely," Ralston said. "Centricity Practice Solution has turned out to be an excellent system for us. Of course, it's still a work-in-progress, and perhaps always will be as our practice, and American healthcare in general, continue to evolve. But I'm convinced that this is a solution we'll be able to rely on as we navigate these turbulent times."



### About Virginia Women's Center

Founded in the late 1960s by two obstetricians committed to excellence in patient care, Virginia Women's Center (VWC) now serves up to 70,000 patients a year at five locations in the Greater Richmond area. Its staff of over 40 providers includes more than 30 physicians providing many of the healthcare services a woman might need over the course of her lifetime, including:

- Obstetrics
- Gynecology
- Urology
- High-risk Obstetrics (Maternal-Fetal Medicine)
- OB Genetic Counseling
- Ultrasound
- In-office Surgeries
- Mammography
- Bone Health
- Psychology
- Nutrition
- Onsite Labs
- Clinical Research



For details, please visit <http://www.VirginiaWomensCenter.com>.

## About GE Healthcare

GE Healthcare provides transformational medical technologies and services that are shaping a new age of patient care. Our broad expertise in medical imaging and information technologies, medical diagnostics, patient monitoring systems, drug discovery, biopharmaceutical manufacturing technologies, performance improvement and performance solutions services help our customers to deliver better care to more people around the world at a lower cost. In addition, we partner with healthcare leaders, striving to leverage the global policy change necessary to implement a successful shift to sustainable healthcare systems.

Our “healthymagination” vision for the future invites the world to join us on our journey as we continuously develop innovations focused on reducing costs, increasing access and improving quality around the world. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, GE Healthcare is a unit of General Electric Company (NYSE: GE). Worldwide, GE Healthcare employees are committed to serving healthcare professionals and their patients in more than 100 countries. For more information about GE Healthcare, visit our website at [www.gehealthcare.com](http://www.gehealthcare.com).

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