



By J. Henson – The Capital

At Annapolis Pulmonary Specialists, Dr. Aimee Yu pulls up a patient's information from a Web-based electronic medical records product called AMCIS. Dr. Yu and other local doctors said the technology increases efficiency.

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Electronic medical record use grows

By **KATIE ARCIERI**, Staff Writer

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Dr. Aimee Yu of Annapolis Pulmonary Specialists said she no longer plays phone tag with her patients.

Thanks to a Web-based electronic medical records technology called AMCIS, she now jumps online to answer their questions, schedule appointments, send lab results and refill prescriptions.

"It's the wave of the future," she said.

Dr. Yu is part of a growing number of local doctors using electronic medical records.

The technology is part of a trend driven by the need to improve patient care and increase productivity for doctors in Maryland where reimbursements are particularly low, said Doug Abel, vice president and chief information officer for Anne Arundel Medical Center.

He said about 85 percent of medical records at the hospital are now available electronically. Although only 15 to 20 percent of practices in the U.S. use electronic records, more local physicians are using the technology now compared to five years ago, he said.

"Clearly the trend is toward more and more offices automating their practices," he said.

Doctors who use electronic records say their practices are more efficient.

"We have many fewer people pulling charts and needing to be in the file room," said Dr. Brian Wolf, a physician with Annapolis Internal Medicine on Defense Highway.

With AMCIS, physicians like Dr. Wolf can go on to a secure Web site, pull up a schedule, type in notes from appointments, send e-mail and review scanned documents.

"These doctors can sit down in their office at home or at the end of the day and can virtually in a matter of 20 minutes or a half hour see 20 patients," said Donald Holler, account executive and director of business development in Maryland for M.D. Web Solutions, creator of AMCIS.

Meanwhile, consumers said the records help them track medical history and receive excellent health care from far away.

"With this I can send (Dr. Wolf) an e-mail and he's back in touch with me well within 48 hours, sometimes it's within a half-hour," said Calvert County resident Cathy Simpson.


But as doctors across the country slowly embrace electronic records technology, questions of unauthorized access and security often arise, said Even Hendricks, editor of Privacy Times, a Montgomery County-based newsletter for professionals who work in the field of information law and privacy.

"Those are all factors that need to be addressed before data is put into the systems," Mr. Hendricks said.

"If you don't have safeguards in place, then abuse is predictable.

AMCIS is the brainchild of Dr. Cyril Spiro who graduated from medical school at the University of Maryland in 2002, two years after receiving his master's of business administration from the school. While

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Government
Lifestyle
Opinion
Columnists
Home & Garden
Religion
Archives
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Online forms
Pets
Site map
Front page




working as a medical information officer for a Florida hospital, he came across several computerized-record systems he felt weren't adequate for doctors like himself.

"They didn't involve the patient and it wasn't intelligently designed," he said.

So Dr. Spiro launched M.D. Web Solutions in 2004 in Florida to develop AMCIS and address those challenges. His company created Web-based technology that not only allows patients to correspond with their doctors through e-mail, but also enables physicians to talk to each other about patients. The technology is taking off. Dr. Spiro said he's seen sales soar 75 percent each year since 2004. There are more than 50 doctors using AMCIS across Maryland and Florida, he said. Those doctors combined have about 250,000 patients, he said.

Dr. Spiro said he's also in talks with a national consultant group to expand the product to other states.

The company already made a pitch to Anne Arundel Medical Center for the AMCIS Viewer, a technology that would allow the hospital to view medical records from doctors' office and vice versa, he said. Hospital officials said they are looking to several solutions to address that challenge by the end of the year.

Dr. Spiro said AMCIS is designed to make the transition from paper to electronic records easy. The product is implemented in phases starting with a secure Web site. Dr. Spiro said software modules are gradually added for such functions as prescription refills, scanning, electronic faxing and physician documentation.

The product costs \$10,000 to \$20,000 per doctor, he said. Servers are stored in doctor's offices in case the Internet shuts down and backup servers in Florida also hold patient data, he said. AMCIS also provides patients with a one-time password to provide their data with anyone they choose.

Dr. Spiro recalled a story of a patient traveling to Switzerland who needed urgent surgery. The patient gave permission to a Swiss doctor to pull up his medical history thanks to the password, he said.

Providing readily available information at the time of need has become more critical for doctors. With AMCIS, Dr. Wolf said he can pull up a patient's most recent office visit or the medications he prescribes without ever leaving his chair.

Dr. Wolf said he hopes one day doctors across the nation will be able to access an interconnected electronic records system

"That's the goal we'd like to see," he said. "I think the developers of this product have that as a goal in mind."
