

# Physicians to Women

Weathering the storm with Centricity®  
Practice Management and EMR



## Physicians to Women — Centricity Practice Management case study

*When Physicians to Women, an OB/GYN practice on Florida's east coast, went live with Centricity Practice Management and EMR on August 23, 2004, they were hoping it would help improve patient care, workflows, and profitability. Unfortunately, in September 2004, Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne hit this section of coast just 23 days apart. In the aftermath of those storms, Centricity gave Physicians to Women access to all its medical and financial records even while they worked from a spare office in the local hospital. "The Centricity system worked when everyone else was down," says practice administrator Patricia Cassidy.*

### Prepared for emergencies, ready for the future

In 2000, Physicians to Women (PTW) started creating its digital office with Centricity Practice Management. By 2005, the 10-provider OB/GYN practice had built a state-of-the-art system that merged Centricity PM with Centricity Electronic Medical Records (EMR), document scanning, voice recognition software, secure e-mail, and even online patient scheduling.

Pat Cassidy, the practice administrator, wanted to create an efficient office and ensure that her 10 providers had all the information they needed, whether they were in the office, at home, or at the hospital. Now, a comprehensive system based on GE Healthcare's Centricity Practice Management and EMR speeds up billing, ensures that charts are always current and accessible, and enables secure doctor-patient communications. PTW saves more than \$109,000/year in transcription and printing costs alone. But both staff and patients know that the real benefits go beyond dollars. Their trial by fire — or in this case, by hurricane — proved that the Centricity system can literally be a lifesaver.

### Integrated from A to GE

The core of PTW's system is GE Healthcare's Centricity, integrated with a variety of third-party programs to fill special needs. Everything is HIPAA-compliant, built to HL7 standards, and ready to expand. The core of the system is Centricity Practice Management (PM), which was originally installed in 2000, and the Centricity EMR, installed in 2004. The two sides of Centricity work together to manage every aspect of the practice's core business: scheduling, demographics, patient histories, charting, billing, and collections. By combining demographics and charting information, the Centricity system automates billing, creating accurate, well-documented charges for each patient.

Centricity Practice Management also integrates tools such as three GE Voluson ultrasound units, a GE Lunar Bone Density Scanner and electronic links to LabCorp, Quest, and Palm Beach Pathology laboratories that automatically load lab results into the correct patient chart. Information from all these tools flows seamlessly into the Centricity PM and EMR, creating one integrated repository for all clinical and administrative patient data.

Physicians to Women has more than 40 users — including 5 physicians and 3 certified nurse-midwives, 2 Nurse Practitioners and more than 20 labor-and-delivery nurses — using the Centricity-based system. Providers use HP tablets; there are also 3 laptops, 2 touch-screen kiosks, and more than 30 wired workstations. A VPN connects the main office to a dedicated workstation at the local hospital and to providers' homes. The practice's second location, which opens in fall 2005, uses Citrix thin-client terminals. In September 2005, one year after the Centricity EMR was implemented, PTW moved its paper charts to off-site storage and reclaimed that space for two offices.

*"Centricity was a lifesaver after the two hurricanes. We moved the server and our tablet computers to a temporary office in the hospital and put announcements on TV to let our obstetric patients know where we were. With only 10 days experience on the system, I was amazed at how well everyone did. The Centricity system worked when everyone else was down."*

Pat Cassidy,  
Practice Administrator, Physicians to Women

## The proof's in the hurricane

Planning was the key to PTW's success. The GE Healthcare team worked closely with Cassidy to bring all the pieces together, create new workflows and system interfaces, and ensure that everything worked smoothly. In addition, PTW certified nurse-midwife Angela Wilson-Liverman dedicated half of her time to planning and implementing the project until it was complete.

"We went live with everything at once," Cassidy recalls, "and I'm so glad we didn't drag it out. We spent lots of time — eight months — on preparation, training, and dry runs of every task, including ordering, imaging and labs. Angela's teaching experience was a big help; she even created proficiency tests."

Because of that excellent planning and training, PTW was well-prepared to take care of patients when Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne hit just 10 days after the go-live date. After all, when a baby is coming, it won't wait for the floods to subside.

The practice's office was undamaged, but it had no power or phone service. The hospital, although the elevator shaft had been destroyed and part of the building was flooded, had power from its emergency generators and let PTW use a spare office. Durend Burnside, president of Ideal4All Consulting and the practice's local consultant, moved the server and tablet computers to the hospital and doctors began working from there immediately. Using Centricity, PTW was able to quickly identify patients in their third trimester, get their phone numbers, and call to tell them about the new location. Luckily, the practice was able to return to its office in a week — with more appreciation than ever for the capabilities of Centricity. The Centricity system enabled the practice to keep serving patients during a time of chaos, when more traditional offices were shut down entirely.

## Centricity at work

Centricity saved this practice more than \$109,000 in its first year, even before counting the value of reductions in staff. Cassidy explains, "The doctors did a lot of dictation, especially for gynecological patients. You can't template things like that. So they dictated everything. With just 4 doctors (we have 5 now), our transcription bill was \$7,000 a month — that's \$84,000 a year. Now it's zero."

Now that the Centricity system has replaced physical charts, super bills, and other forms, Cassidy calculates that PTW is saving almost \$25,000/year in printing and supplies. So, considering only transcription and printing expenses, savings are \$109,000 per year.

Then there are the staff savings. Before implementing the complete Centricity system, Cassidy needed 6 people in the front office. Now, with PatientLink importing medical histories to the Centricity EMR in less than a second and Centricity Practice Management and EMR working together to create instant, accurate patient statements, the practice needs only 3 people in front. The billing department has just 4 FTEs to take care of 10 providers — scheduling surgeries, booking new OB patients, claims submission, posting payments, appealing denials, and working accounts receivable. "Centricity PM and EMR together make your practice so efficient that you can reduce labor costs drastically if you have the right people doing their jobs," Cassidy says.

On the management side, Cassidy does most of her "heavy lifting" with Centricity Practice Management. Its flexible reporting capabilities allow her to get any data quickly and easily. "I used to spend half a day running reports," she says; "now it takes minutes." One of her custom reports creates a list of OB patients arranged by delivery date. "I used to do that manually in Excel. Now I can run the report automatically with whatever parameters I want."

In addition, because of the disease-management and financial tools built into Centricity EMR, Cassidy has been able to negotiate higher reimbursement rates with insurance carriers. She looks forward to the day when other payers, such as Medicare, will reward best practices with increased reimbursement based on the use of an EMR.

Wilson-Liverman says she uses the Centricity system's flexible reporting capabilities to help with patient follow-up. "I can look for patients who haven't had Pap smears or mammograms, for example. With this system, I spend so much less time trying to find charts! Centricity EMR lets us track patient problems, identify trends, and link assessments back to the original problem. It's so much easier than our old system — it's easier to see what's missing."

Other practices have begun to notice PTW's success. Cassidy was asked to speak on hurricane preparedness at the Florida MGMA meeting in April 2005. They are also hosting visits from other practices anxious to see the Centricity system in action. "I want other practices to see all the advantages of our Centricity installation, how it helps us be a better practice, and how it's an integral part of patient care," says Cassidy.

## CHUG Award

Physicians to Women Wins GE Award

The 2004 GE Healthcare User Summit meeting was held in September, the same month that two hurricanes were pummeling Physicians to Women's hometown. Members of the Centricity Healthcare User Group Board of Directors were so impressed by PTW's use of Centricity to weather the storm that they voted to give this practice an award:

**Centricity Healthcare User Group award,  
EMR — 2004 Achievements and Innovations:  
Practice Transformation**

Awarded to Physicians to Women, September 24, 2004

“Having the GE system clinched our decision to open a second office — it allows us to transfer records and share information without having to carry paper back and forth.”

Pat Cassidy,  
*Practice Administrator, Physicians to Women*

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imagination at work

## Benefits

Physicians to Women first installed Centricity Practice Management in 2000, and added Centricity EMR in 2004. The combined Centricity system has allowed this practice to run more efficiently, reduce overhead costs, and serve patients better.

These are just a few of the benefits PTW appreciates most:

- Complete patient records are available from anywhere, anytime, with HIPAA-compliant security, and never a need to make photocopies or hunt for charts.
- Many tasks are automated, from voice-recognition charting that eliminates dictation to automated billing and electronic claims that have reduced payment times to less than 10 days.
- The practice now saves more than \$84,000/year by eliminating dictation costs and almost \$25,000/year in printing and supplies.
- When its community was hit by two hurricanes in September 2004, PTW was able to operate out of the local hospital immediately, with access to all its patient charts. “We couldn't have physically moved all the charts we needed,” Cassidy remembers. “Centricity Practice Management worked when everyone else was down.”

Cassidy says, “I just feel the system works so well. Centricity EMR and Practice Management together make your practice so efficient that you can reduce labor costs drastically if you have the right people doing their jobs. Our practice needs just 5 people — 4 FTEs — in the billing department for 10 providers.”

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