

# Halfpenny for your thoughts



## Paper Versus Paperless: The Difference in Patient Health Records

by *Adriana Falco, Director of Marketing at Halfpenny Technologies, Inc.*

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The other week, I went to my ENT about a minor condition I am receiving treatment. The doc came into my exam room with a smile and holding my health records in hand; a paper folder with the colorful letters “A” and “F” stickered on the outside and paper documents containing his handwritten information on the inside.

As the doc sat down, pulled out a pen and began to look through my chart of records, it dawned on me how archaic it appears for him to be handwriting his pages of notes which were held together by little paperclips. What happens if their only set of my medical records is misfiled or misplaced? What if someone spills coffee on my paper files and the ballpoint ink smears or, worse yet, disappears? What if my paper folder of records needs to be sent to one of his other office locations and is lost in transit? There are way too many ‘what ifs’ when all could be streamline smoother by switching to electronic records.

It just seems almost everything and everyone is thinking green and going paperless these days, so why not all physician offices? So I asked my doctor if any of his patients’ records were electronic. “Not yet,” he responded, but informed me that changing over to an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system was in the practice’s plan for 2012.

Recent research shows that the average medical practice spends more than \$16,000 on the creation and storage of paper records on patients, each and every year, plus it exhausts an additional \$12,000+ annually on the over 575 hours of manual labor it takes to maintain these paper records. Finan-

cial matters are not the only concerns. Storage of these files becomes an issue as does archiving and retrieval from the bottomless floors below, as well as, when to destroy the sets of records with the point of no return.

Then it happened. In between my visits, I called that doctor’s office with questions regarding my medication. The nurse on the phone was unable to respond to my concerns since she was not able to locate my paper folder of paper notes. As miserable as I felt at the time of my call, I would have to wait until my paper file was found for the answers. Ugh! Can 2012 come any sooner?

In addition to saving insurmountable costs and valuable time, switching paper to electronic offers numerous other advantages, such as simple remote and simultaneous access of patient information by multiple caregivers, better patient privacy, enhanced communication between practitioners and patients as well as among practitioners, and improved overall practice efficiency and revenue, including billing and collection. The icing on the cake? Improved quality of health care and enhanced patient services which would include no more misplaced patient files!

Thank goodness for the American Recovery Act of 2009 which is encouraging all physicians, hospitals and labs to change from paper to paperless. The Act requires medical offices to switch to electronic health records by 2014 with a whopping \$25.8 billion on the line to modernize health information technology systems. The Recovery Act also specifies three main components of Meaningful Use staged over five years, including the use of certified EHR technology for the electronic

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exchange of health information to *improve quality of health care*. Exactly what I was stating! In addition, the Act has incentives. Healthcare providers who install EHR systems may receive up to \$18,000 in the first year of EHR implementation, dropping to \$12,000 if it occurs in 2014.

One of the best advantages of going paperless is the availability of exciting new technologies like receiving and sending lab orders via a handheld wireless device, to wherever the physician may be ... in the hospital, at home, or even on a tropical vacation ... and having that same information automatically included in the patient health record! No more ballpoint pens, paperclips, or sheets of paper to be had. Instead is a smartphone or tablet in hand with the provider's entire patient database within a finger's reach.

Halfpenny Technologies, a leading provider of healthcare connectivity and integration solutions, offers healthcare providers and labs, alike, two mobile applications. The first is ITF-GoDoc®, a real-time smartphone app that enables physicians to securely access lab results reports – such as laboratory, pathology, radiology and other clinical results reports – right from their handheld mobile devices through push technology. It's HIPPA compliant with configurable alerts and results filters.

The second is ITF-GoDoc® MobileOE, a fully-functional and integrated mobile CPOE (computerized provider order entry) platform designed for the Apple iPad, Motorola Xoom and Android tablets. This dynamic app allows orders to be dropped to any capable EHR, laboratory information, or billing and accounts receivable systems and features billing information prompts, ask-at-order entry questions, specimen types, and medical necessity checks to help ensure clean orders for receiving labs.

*Less* physical space, *less* manpower, and *less* errors plus *more* access, *more* efficiency, and *more* savings alone is enough to win the debate of "Paper versus Paperless" when it comes to patient health records. Loss of medical records and duplications will become a thing of the past. Electronically transmitting lab orders and pharmacy prescriptions will become the norm. Going paperless is also environmentally-friendly by eliminating paper altogether and saving Mother Nature's precious trees. And don't lose sight of the bottom line and clincher: better health care, better patient services, and way better revenue.

This is a no brainer. Hands down, *paperless wins!* ☞



## *About the Author*

Adriana Falco is Director of Marketing at Halfpenny Technologies, where she directs the marketing and messaging for the company's portfolio of clinical integration solutions. An accomplished senior marketing executive with over 20 years experience, Adriana provides valuable insight into corporate marketing and communications strategies that drive brand awareness, product management, market identification and targeting, and product messaging. Prior to Halfpenny, Adriana directed marketing for Healthcare Data Management, Inc., Healthworks Alliance, Inc., Image Solutions, Inc., and Managed Care Strategies, Inc. Her degrees include a Bachelor's from Villanova University and a Master's from Drexel University. Contact Adriana at [afalco@halfpenny.com](mailto:afalco@halfpenny.com).

## *About Halfpenny Technologies*

Halfpenny Technologies is a leading provider of clinical data exchange solutions, enabling hospitals and laboratories to integrate with disparate physician EMR systems. Halfpenny's SaaS-based ITF-Hub® provides a reliable, secure platform to exchange clinical, financial and administrative data while reducing complexity and costs. Additionally, a consolidated stream of LOINC mapped data can be routed to constituents for other initiatives, including HIE, ACO, HEDIS, PQRI and various health plan reports. ITF-Portal® is a Web-based order entry and results reporting system to rapidly search and retrieve various clinical reports. ITF-GoDoc® is a mobile app to access lab, pathology, radiology and other clinical results reports securely. ITF-GoDoc® MobileOE is a mobile CPOE system for secure billing, ask-at-order entry questions, specimen types and medical necessity compliance.

*Halfpenny for your Thoughts* is an online blog written by staff at Halfpenny Technologies.