

Laserfiche ECM Blogs

Dallas Dermatologists “Bring Documents to Life”

Written by Meghann Wooster

If you’ve been in business for more than 50 years, chances are you’ve got a number of time-tested best practices that help your organization operate efficiently. Such was certainly the case for Dallas Associated Dermatologists, a nine-physician dermatology practice that logs roughly 75,000 patient encounters a year.

“Since 1954, our physicians have been refining the way they keep track of patient information,” says Bill Duke, executive director of the practice. “Although we knew we wanted to transition away from paper charts, we wanted our electronic records to mirror the form and format of our paper charts exactly. There aren’t many solutions out there that are flexible enough to do that.”

Duke would know. As the man in charge of the business side of the practice, he led the effort to find and implement a content management system. “Prior to 2007,” he says, “we used paper charts at all three of our locations. Storing so much paper took up a lot of space, and finding the right information took up a lot of staff time. And there was always the possibility that a document could go missing.”

For a practice dedicated to excellence, continued reliance on paper files was not the answer. “Providing state of the art care isn’t just about attracting the best doctors and staying abreast of the latest medical developments,” explains Duke. “It’s also about implementing innovative technology that helps your practice run as smoothly as possible.”

In 2007, Dallas Associated Dermatologists added a document management module to its billing software. The result, Duke says, was less than ideal. “What we got was basically a managed repository—the search functionality was limited, and you pretty much had to know exactly where you’d saved a document in order to locate it again.” It quickly became clear that the practice needed a more robust solution.

“The first time around, I confined my search to software that had been designed specifically for the healthcare community,” Duke explains. “The second time around, I looked further afield.”

Technology that Adapts to the Flow of the Practice

After describing the needs of his practice to a scanning company, Duke was directed to take a look at Laserfiche, a company that creates simple and elegant enterprise content

management (ECM) solutions for organizations across a wide range of industries—including healthcare.

“I remember seeing a postcard from Laserfiche that said something to the effect of, ‘Our approach to electronic medical records doesn’t make doctors change the way they work.’ I thought, ‘If that’s true, then that’s exactly what we need,’” he says.

Duke began talking to ImageNet Office Systems, a Laserfiche reseller that’s also based in Dallas, and purchased Laserfiche in 2009. According to Brian Simpson, solutions manager at ImageNet, more and more medical practices are becoming interested in Laserfiche solutions because “they handle the business processes involved in automating the capture and processing of medical records in a way that’s not overwhelming, complicated or cumbersome for doctors and staff, and they do so in a way that addresses business needs outside the scope of an EMR as well.”

“A lot of vendors want to fit a round peg into a square hole by forcing you to use their templates,” Duke adds. “With Laserfiche, we can create our own templates, our own fields and our own classifications for documents. That flexibility gives us control over our output, and it lets our physicians continue to chart in the way that works best for them.”

According to Duke, the doctors at Dallas Associated Dermatologists want to interact with their patients during appointments and have balked at reviewing EMR systems that require them to type their notes into the system while they’re in the room with a patient. “That’s not conducive to building the patient relationship and providing high-quality care” says Duke. “Laserfiche provides us the opportunity to bring our documents to life without having a negative impact on our patient relationships.”

Technology that Accelerates the Flow of the Practice

Since implementing Laserfiche, the practice has been scanning patient records into the system on a day-forward basis. Laserfiche Quick Fields automates chart processing by capturing data from the practice’s various forms and sorting the documents according to custom criteria. Once the information has been indexed and stored in the Laserfiche repository, it is immediately available to Dallas Associated Dermatologists’:

- Doctors and Nurses
- Front Desk
- Appointment/Service Center
- Telephone Triage (Rx refills, Special Request)
- Billing and Collections

“With Laserfiche,” Duke says, “there’s no such thing as a failed scan. Our users can quickly and easily verify the scan or find anything that’s been scanned into the system, using whatever search method they prefer. Nothing is lost, and that helps me sleep better at night.”

In addition to the ease of search and retrieval, the practice also benefits from the business process management (BPM) tools included in the Laserfiche suite. “Workflow automates much of our sign-out process for physician notes,” Duke explains. “Once transcriptions have been imported into Laserfiche, they’re automatically routed to the Transcriptionist folder where they’re linked to their .wav files. We’re also testing how to automate other paper-intensive processes, such as prescription refill approval, using Workflow.”

The practice is also working to implement Laserfiche in areas of the business that are not directly related to patient charts, such as Accounts Payable, Inventory and HR. “EMR systems are focused exclusively on patient records, but Laserfiche is going to allow us to streamline operations across the practice,” says Duke. He anticipates that once the system has been configured to do everything he wants it to do across the practice, the time savings for staff will be huge.

In addition to the forthcoming efficiency gains, the practice is already benefitting from its ability to eliminate document storage. “Space that would have been used to store hardcopy files is now used for revenue-generating activities,” Duke explains.

“Laserfiche lets us do exactly what we want to do, in exactly the way we want to do it. Our staff takes pride in making sure our digital files are in tip-top shape, and we’re always looking for new ways to use Laserfiche to help make us more efficient,” he concludes.



Meghann Wooster is a senior writer at Laserfiche, helping information management and IT professionals optimize their use of enterprise content management (ECM) software. Follow her on twitter at @LFMeghann