



## Editorial

# Rx for success / Vista Community Clinic goes all-electronic on patient records

By Union-Tribune Editorial Board,

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No more having to read doctors' handwriting at Vista Community Clinic. On Tuesday, patient records at the five-site clinic will be completely electronic.

It's a huge accomplishment for a low-budget institution providing primary care to 60,000 patients making a quarter-million visits a year. The Vista clinic is the first provider of size in San Diego County to convert and is in the vanguard nationally for community clinics.

Though electronic records are a national goal, the conversion challenge is formidable. Vista phased its switch over two years, increasing its information technology department six times and logging 5,000 training hours.

Patients already are enjoying the benefits. No more hand-delivering a prescription to the pharmacy. And those anxious days spent wondering if lab results would confirm a diagnosis? They're history. CEO Barbara Mannino said electronic lab results often are back in less than 24 hours. When baby can't wait, hospitalists at Tri-City Hospital don't have to either for mother's records from the clinic. There is instant off-site access. Mannino likes the quality assurance that data-mining of patient records can bring: How many at-risk patients have gone more than three years without a mammogram?

The medical director, Dr. Kelly Motadel, is excited about improvements in care. Asthmatics, for example, are supposed to be prescribed an additional medicine when the frequency of attacks passes a threshold. With computerized records, that can be double-checked.

The last step, converting 80 family medicine doctors and nurses, provided delightful anecdotes. One physician was so technologically unsophisticated he did not own a remote for his TV at home. Another could not log in – his keyboard was locked in capital letter mode. That proves, we suppose, that even someone with medical degrees is not as (computer) smart as a fifth-grader.

Congratulations to all at Vista Community Clinic.

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