



A physician-friendly approach to EMRs

Interface helps Chicago medical groups link transcription and electronic recordkeeping platforms

THE CHALLENGE

Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation and Loyola University Health System, both based in Chicago, represent two of the largest and most prestigious medical groups in the Midwest. Together, the organizations employ more than 2,300 physicians and residents who bring the cutting-edge research of a leading academic institution to the care they provide.

Like many healthcare organizations in recent years, Northwestern and Loyola have adopted electronic medical records (EMRs) as a way to streamline their documentation process. However, converting to EMRs without disrupting physician workflow presented a unique challenge, given that many doctors prefer dictating patient notes orally as opposed to entering information manually into a computer. For both health systems, the solution came in the form of EMR integration from Emdat Inc., a provider of web-based transcription management software.

THE SOLUTION

Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation, a multi-specialty physician group at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, was an early adopter of electronic medical records, implementing a solution from Epic in the 1990s. Despite the organization's commitment to digitalized records, the system initially collected only a portion of the patient information stored at its sprawling downtown facility. Many physicians continued to dictate their notes, resulting in paper records that often took weeks to route and approve and required additional storage space.

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MEDICAL FACILITY CUSTOMER PROFILE



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SYSTEM

Loyola University Medical Center

- Located on a 61-acre campus in Maywood, IL
- Consists of Loyola University Hospital, Ronald McDonald Children's Hospital and multiple specialty clinics and office buildings
- Affiliated with the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine



Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation

Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation

- Multi-specialty physician group based in downtown Chicago
- Employs roughly 600 physicians
- Affiliated with the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

EMR INTERFACING RESULTS

- Transcription **TURNAROUND TIME DECREASED BY MORE THAN 50%**
- **DOCTORS DICTATE**, saving time and improving patient care
- Paperless patient records **REDUCE COSTS** and require less floor space



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Northwestern's transcription provider started using Emdat's online platform in 2001, which accelerated the transfer of files and simplified the document management process. However, the goal of creating a complete, centralized repository of patient information remained. Emdat's application development team began working with Northwestern to create a customized integration that would link the transcriptions stored on its secure servers to the Epic system, allowing the EMR to capture all of the facility's clinical data.

Emdat helped Northwestern produce a functioning interface that, utilizing a CloverLeaf Solutions interface engine, was capable of uploading information from medical transcriptions into the EMR — at no additional charge to the physician group. In just over a month, the organization had a comprehensive electronic system through which doctors could access up-to-date information on any patient.

Emdat also helped link its transcription platform with Northwestern's practice management system and PACS medical imaging software, both supplied by GE, in order to create a simpler, more reliable patient documentation process. As a result, Emdat is now able to electronically import demographic and physician information to its servers, reducing the risk of manual entry errors. Meanwhile, radiologists and other physicians that rely on the PACS system can easily create and edit dictations while viewing the corresponding image.

Loyola University Health System began using Emdat software around the same time, beginning in an outpatient orthopedics unit and later at Loyola University Medical Center in suburban Maywood. In Loyola's case, the choice of a transcription service came while it was planning for the eventual adoption of an EMR system across the campus, making Emdat's integration abilities a key factor in its decision.

When the hospital installed an Epic electronic recordkeeping system in 2004, technology staff from Loyola, Emdat and Epic worked together to create a secure interface in just days. "Connecting the two platforms turned out to be a surprising simple process, which speaks not only to the flexibility of Emdat's software, but to the company's very knowledgeable interface team," says Tom Sklodowski, a Senior Systems Analyst at the medical center.

***"Emdat's interfaces are
some of the most reliable
we have at our facility."***

**ROBERT MILFAJT
SENIOR TECHNICAL ARCHITECT
NORTHWESTERN MEDICAL FACULTY
FOUNDATION**

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THE RESULT

Today, there's no delay in medical personnel at either organization seeing a report, performing edits or signing off, all of which can be done electronically. As a result, the Emdat/EMR interface has significantly improved the efficiency of document management and reduced compliance issues. At Loyola, for instance, Emdat's platform has helped reduce the average turnaround time for transcribed documents by more than 50 percent.

In addition, Loyola University Medical Center and the Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation are now virtually paperless when it comes to patient records, helping both organizations reduce costs and make better use of available floor space. From a security standpoint, the interfaces utilize state-of-the-art, 128-bit encryption technology, which enables compliance with stringent HIPAA regulations.

The benefits of linking transcription technology and an EMR have gone beyond administrative considerations, however. The providers' decision to create a "hybrid" approach to recordkeeping was ultimately driven by a preference on the part of many doctors to dictate notes, which they feel saves time and leads to improved care. The interface has allowed physicians to use EMRs without disrupting their workflow or changing how they interact with patients.

At Northwestern, Emdat's no-cost integration services and ongoing technical support have helped contribute to what is now a decade-long partnership. "Emdat's interfaces are some of the most reliable we have at our facility," says Robert Milfajt, a Senior Technical Architect at the physician group. "When we need to contact their support team to handle occasional issues, they've been not only friendly, but very helpful."

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