

E-Medicine Takes Off

With the help of John Deere Health Care, Inc., Greg Hoekstra, D.O., is practicing a form of e-medicine at John Deere Medical Group, P.C., in Waterloo, Iowa. It's of particular value in managing complex conditions like diabetes.

John Deere Health has given clinical assistance to the JDMG family physicians to operate a state-of-the-art electronic medical record-keeping system. The process allows easy entry, retrieval, and revision of patient records, including medical history, lab tests, prescriptions, appointments, images, x-rays, and other data.

JDH works with JDMG and other providers in our network to collectively access and analyze test results and help patients know what care they need.

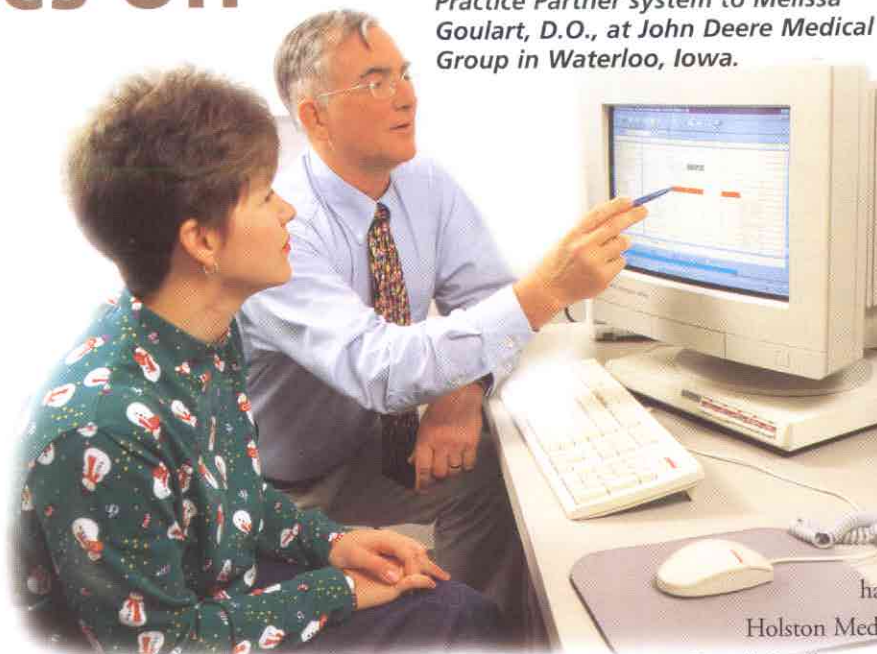
"We have educational material for the providers and members," says Lisa Betsworth, R.N., a Disease Management Coordinator at John Deere Health Care, Inc.

For JDH, "one of the diseases with the most complications and cost impact is diabetes," Dr. Hoekstra says. "From the interest of managed care, to improve quality and lower cost, diabetes is the project you want to do. And the patients who benefit most from having their care managed are the diabetic patients."

Diabetics are at higher risk for heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, amputation, and blindness, he notes. "This is where our missions coincide. It's a perfect example of working together to manage the care."

"It's easy to get the data in and get the data out," Dr. Hoekstra says, noting the Practice Partner® Patient Records system has replaced the time-consuming use of paper charts. JDMG—which is an independent medical practice not owned by JDH—got its new system last spring.

"You have the right data in the right format at the right



Greg Hoekstra, D.O., points out the Practice Partner system to Melissa Goulart, D.O., at John Deere Medical Group in Waterloo, Iowa.

time. If you have that, then you can make better medical decisions," Dr. Hoekstra says.

"They're doing things we really support as a health plan," Betsworth says of JDMG. "This is a way to make the physician's job easier. It's very good for the member."

Diabetics need 13 things checked periodically, such as their feet, eyes, blood pressure, cholesterol level, and hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) level, and the computer system helps make sure those are being checked when they should, Dr. Hoekstra says.

Reports are generated weekly for all doctors to see the status of their diabetic patients. The reports highlight if certain tests are overdue, so patients can be called in for an appointment. External laboratories interface with the system automatically, communicating important information

more quickly and accurately to the physician.

When a patient comes in, the system will display a red button on their chart if there are tests due, Dr. Hoekstra says. That includes any items, such as cancer screenings and immunizations.

Bruce Steffens, M.D., Chief Medical Officer for JDHC, Inc., wants all diabetics to have an HbA1c level under 9 percent. JDMG currently has 91 percent of its diabetics meeting that standard.

Many other JDH contracted providers have similar electronic systems, including Holston Medical Group in Kingsport, Tenn. Linda Russell Qualls, a nurse practitioner, is Holston's Health Management Director. "The system helps doctors easily track medications and lab results, and monitor when patients need other tests," she says. "In addition, we coordinate patient care with the nurse case managers at the JDH Kingsport site."

The benefits of the high-tech process also include form letters into which information can be personalized for patients; letters and records from referrals can be scanned in, and transcriptionists can automatically send information from recorded cases to several parts of the electronic chart.

As in other JDMG offices, Dr. Hoekstra also has the ability to electronically send prescriptions to the on-site pharmacy.

Making sure members get the right care at the right time is a priority for JDH, and the electronic systems at offices like these provide an important step toward reaching that goal.