

## At a Glance

### Organization

- Coastal Cardiology  
San Luis Obispo, Calif.
- 12 physicians
  - 3 clinics

### Solution Spotlight

- McKesson's Practice Partner® Patient Records

### Critical Issues

- Increasing productivity and efficiency
- Improving quality of care
- Improving access to patient data at three sites

### Results

- Improved efficiency allowed the group to add two physicians without increasing administrative head count
- Better managed patient data with electronic chart tabs for EKGs, echocardiograms, surgery, and other cardiology-specific sections
- Reclaimed precious office space previously dedicated to paper charts

## Coastal Cardiology Increasing Productivity in a Cardiology Practice

Coastal Cardiology was convinced there had to be a more efficient way to manage medical records than keeping paper charts. After implementing McKesson's Practice Partner® Patient Records, the practice was able to significantly improve efficiency, quality of care and communication between its three locations. The improvement in productivity has even allowed the group to bring on two additional physicians — without increasing administrative head count.

### Challenges and Implementation

Like most practices, Coastal Cardiology traditionally kept their patient information in paper charts. "I recall watching one or two employees filing, disassembling, and reassembling stacks of paper charts on a daily basis in order to update them with incoming laboratory and hospital reports," recalls Michael Famularo, M.D., F.A.C.C. "I remember thinking that this was probably the way they were doing things back in 1920, and that there had to be a more efficient method."

After an extensive search, Coastal Cardiology decided to implement Practice Partner Patient Records. The physicians liked many aspects of the system, including the long track history of successful installations. Another aspect that impressed Coastal Cardiology was the program's versatility in meeting the needs of the clinic. "Practice Partner Patient Records was flexible enough to

accomplish the goals we had set for an electronic health record (EHR) system," states Dr. Famularo. With Practice Partner Patient Records, Coastal Cardiology found an electronic chart that the cardiologists felt met their needs. "We tailored the Practice Partner Patient Records system to look like our paper charts. With Practice Partner Patient Record's flexibility, customizing the patient chart was easy," explains Dr. Famularo. Coastal Cardiology created special electronic chart tabs for EKGs, echocardiograms, surgery, and other cardiology-specific sections.

### Results

Coastal Cardiology approached the project with the objective of becoming paperless and they have succeeded. This has had a tremendous impact from both administrative and clinical perspectives. For the front office, the biggest improvement was chart access. The office staff no longer has to search patient charts. Instead, patient charts can be accessed from any Practice Partner Patient Records workstation, reducing the time spent manually searching for charts. This is particularly useful with three geographically dispersed offices. Coastal Cardiology's three offices are connected by a wide area network (WAN), all linked to a central computer, so that all of their patient's charts are available from any workstation at any of the offices. "With Practice Partner Patient Records, any patient chart can be pulled up in a matter of seconds, providing us with patient-

# Case Study

**“Practice Partner Patient Records was flexible enough to accomplish the goals we had set for an electronic health (EHR) system.”**

**Michael Famularo, M.D., F.A.C.C.**  
*Physician*  
*Coastal Cardiology*

specific information the instant we need it.”

The practice has become much more efficient in terms of its clinical documentation, since the entire progress note can be created and completed at the point of care. This allows patient data to be accessible immediately after the patient leaves. This has been particularly useful for documenting the routine non-invasive tests that are a standard part of a cardiology practice. “With treadmill work-ups and stress echocardiograms, data entry can be accomplished in the procedure room, providing a complete chart when you are done,” states Dr. Famularo.

Every one of Coastal Cardiology’s twelve different physicians approaches documentation in a slightly different manner. Even with twelve different styles, Practice Partner Patient Records is diverse enough to accommodate every physician. By utilizing direct entry or dictation, each physician is able to create progress notes in a timely manner, while simultaneously updating the complete patient chart. For those physicians who employ direct entry, Practice Partner Patient Records provides a host of features to enhance data entry, including clinical templates, clinical macros, and free form text. “It’s been easy to customize the system to each of the partner’s needs,” notes Dr. Famularo.

An important feature for the charts at Coastal Cardiology is the ability to store images. “Specializing in cardiology, we deal with numerous images for each patient,” explains Dr. Famularo. “Practice Partner Patient Records allows us to input those images directly into the patient’s chart.” For tests such as treadmills or stress echoes, the group uses a scanner to load the images. For routine 12 lead ECGs, Coastal Cardiology employs a software-based product that provides acquisition, display, interpretation and storage using the PCs that are part of their Practice Partner Patient Records system.

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