

Arizona Medical Clinic heals record keeping woes with **Alchemy®**.

“It certainly has made my job easier!”

Arizona Medical Clinic (AMC) is a multi-specialty group practice located in the northwest valley of the Phoenix metropolitan region. Its five locations, with more than 80 physicians, have been serving the Sun Cities and surrounding communities for 30 years. Services include the areas of cardiology, geriatrics, gastroenterology, orthopedics, neurology, psychiatry, urology and more than a dozen other specialties.

With all these patients, physicians, offices and specialties, AMC had quite a task keeping track of its records. The centralized business office had a file room for charge tickets, insurance explanation of benefits, patient information forms, referrals and other paperwork, but accessing that information was cumbersome. If, for example, a physician wanted a copy of a charge ticket, an employee would have to dig through boxes and folders of files. Mailing out claims caused the clinic problems as well, because many of the patients have a second insurance company that the clinic needs to bill. Clinic employees were manually pulling all the secondary explanation of benefits (EOBs) out of boxes and attaching them to the mailings. Plus, the 30 foot by 30 foot file room was too small to hold more than six months of records. The clinic sent older documents to another storage area, and accessing these records incurred a trip charge.

And, even if one knew where to look, it could be difficult to locate the desired documents. The clinic filed different documents under different criteria. If an employee wanted to look up a patient information form and card copy, the employee must first look at the date and then browse through the records alphabetically by patient. The clinic filed authorizations alphabetically or by year, and employees filed EOBs by posting date.

"The system was ineffective, and we needed something easier to use," says Amanda Knox, Business Office Systems Analyst. "It was just very difficult and time consuming to manually pull the required paperwork."

So in early 2001, the IS dept and Business Office Manager researched IMR's Alchemy, a paperless document management solution represented by DigiStor, a leading IMR value added reseller. The clinic purchased the system and installed it in February 2001, and its record keeping processes improved immediately. Staff members scan patient records, insurance files, EOBs and other documents into the Alchemy repository – the clinic scans an average of between 5,000 and 8,000 per day – and hospital personnel can call them up on their desktop computers simply by typing in the patient account number.

"That's one of the reasons that we went with Alchemy," Knox says. "Alchemy could mimic the way we had the file room set up, which would make the transition easier for our employees. Some of the other programs we looked at were limited in the way data could be organized. To accommodate these other systems, we were going to have to change our organization scheme. With Alchemy, we could keep our file system the same. It made training employees much easier."

Certainly, cost was a big factor. The solution was inexpensive to implement. Lisa Wood, Business Office Manager, says the original cost of Alchemy was roughly 15 percent less than other systems. The investment already is paying off measurably. The clinic was able to keep its clerical staff at three employees instead of four, thus saving approximately \$15,000 in wages.

And, those employees are finding significant time savings. The Account Analysts had been waiting up to two weeks for backup documentation that would allow them to answer patient questions, work on accounts and send out refunds, and this documentation is now immediately available. Staffers answer questions over the phone and complete research in the same day, allowing for faster refunds (and therefore happier patients). Employees resubmit claims the same day instead of waiting weeks for EOBs.



In addition, storage costs have decreased considerably, as the following chart shows:

	Retrieval Quantity in cubic feet from Off-site storage	Retrieval Cost from Off-site storage
3/31/03	21.6	\$36.50
2/28/03	127.2	\$214.97
1/31/03	38.4	\$64.90
12/31/02	2.4	\$4.06
TOTAL	189.6	\$320.43
3/31/01	89	\$163.76
2/28/01	180	\$331.20
1/31/01	142	\$261.28
12/31/00	224	\$412.16
TOTAL	635	\$1,168.40

As you can see, the clinic is requesting 70 percent fewer boxes from off-site storage than it was two years ago, and the total cost of retrieving boxes is 73 percent less. In addition, the clinic had been adding 576 cubic feet per year to our off-site storage, but this has stopped and the monthly storage cost has stabilized. In addition, the clinic used a suite as a waiting area for boxes to ship to off-site storage, so it now has an additional 500 square feet of workspace.

"Alchemy has made my job easier, as I can review an EOB quickly while on the phone with patients or insurance carriers, or review my correspondence when patients call back— all without leaving my desk or waiting days for copies from clerical," says Anna Diverty, Account Analyst. "Also, with cut & paste functions, I can create effective appeal documents or use the e-mail function to forward documents to co-workers/doctors to be reviewed in response to a patient's complaint."

"It certainly has made my job easier!" adds Amy Woodward, Medicare Review Analyst. "When I work the Medicare denials and written appeals, no more pulling paper EOBs from the files on the shelves, where they were either higher than I could reach or on the shelf on the floor." If Woodward or other employees have questions regarding Alchemy, the self-service online support helps with troubleshooting.

Plus, Alchemy helps AMC comply with HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Patient information is no longer in plain view, and this helps preserve patient confidentiality. AMC doesn't have to worry about keeping a large file room secure, there is less confidential paper on employees desks, fewer employees are handling paper (thus there's less chance to see paperwork), and there are fewer copies to shred.

As AMC's data storage needs have grown, the clinic has worked with DigiStor. In September 2001, AMC started to exceed its hard drive space, and DigiStor helped the clinic set up a DVD jukebox.

For more information on how Alchemy RecordCare can help your company, please call 1.866.244.9333, send email to sales@imrgold.com, or visit <http://www.imrgold.com>.

