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Finding a niche in electronic health records

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Mike W. Thomas](#)

After nearly 30 years in the health care information technology field, David Chionsini has found his niche helping medical offices transition to using electronic health records (EHR).

Chionsini says when he first heard that the federal economic stimulus package would include incentives for doctors' offices to begin using electronic health records (EHRs), he decided it was a good time to pursue his dream of running his own business.

In early 2008, Chionsini left a position as chief information officer at **Warm Springs Rehabilitation System** to launch **InetWare Technology** LLC — an IT consulting company specializing in helping health care professionals plan for their transition to using EHRs.

By 2015, the federal government will mandate that all physicians use EHRs. But health professionals who accept Medicare and Medicaid payments and make the switch by 2011 can take advantage of a government incentive program worth up to \$64,000.

Under the program, the government will increase Medicare and Medicaid payment reimbursements to physicians starting in 2011 until the 2015 deadline.

However, only those who are meaningful EHR Software (or EMR Software) users are eligible for such an incentive, Chionsini says.

"The amount of money available to individual professionals — up to \$44,000 under the Medicare incentives or up to \$63,750 under the Medicaid incentives — is spurring a lot of practices to move to an electronic health record system," says Rob Tennant, senior policy adviser with the Medical Group Management Association in Washington, D.C.

Tennant says that by 2015, "eligible professionals would need to use medical devices that interact with those of other health care facilities and achieve minimal levels of performance on quality, safety and efficiency."

That will require a lot of advance planning and coordination, says Chionsini, and it needs to be done soon if they expect to take full advantage of the government incentive program.

"I'm expecting to see a big rush beginning sometime next year," Chionsini says. "I would encourage physicians to move forward now, because the longer they wait the harder it will be to get the attention they need from the vendor community."

Drug testing

InetWare Technology pulled in about \$250,000 in revenues during its first year and Chionsini expects that number will grow as the rush to switch to EHR systems begins. Some of Chionsini's current clients include Workforce Solutions Alamo, LabWork Now, Advantage Drug Test and the Texas Contractors Association.

In addition to his consulting work, Chionsini offers Web development and customized software programming services.

Dave Claffin, owner of LabWork Now in San Antonio, met Chionsini at a San Antonio Human Resources Managers Association convention and asked him to help customize a program his firm was using to provide random drug testing services to some large clients.

"We had him write a specific program for us that cut our time to do some projects from 16 hours down to just a couple of hours," Claffin says. "He got it done within a week and it has saved us tons of time."

Claffin says LabWork is so pleased with Chionsini's work that they are planning to use his services in the near future when the firm expects to implement an electronic tablet system for registering people who come to their office to get a drug test.

Claffin says the amount of time it takes to conduct random drug tests is a sore issue in the business community. LabWork Now has been winning over clients by stressing the speed with which they can conduct the tests and now, with Chionsini's help, they will be able to do it that much faster.

Chionsini says the goal of requiring EHRs for all medical practitioners is to streamline the industry and make it more efficient, thus reducing costs.

InetWare Technology is strictly an independent operation that does not work with or endorse any particular EHR products, he adds.

"My goal is not to help the vendors, but to help the physician community," Chionsini says.

Many doctors who have not yet implemented an EHR system say they are concerned about it disrupting their practice, Chionsini says.

That is why it is important to bring in someone with the proper skill set to manage the transition and make sure that there is minimal

disruption during the process.

“The rush will start in 2010 because the incentive payouts begin in 2011,” Chionsini says. “I don’t think anyone is going to want to leave that money on the table.

“If they want to take advantage of this, then they need to start the process now.”

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