

## **The “Best Bang for the Buck”**

**By Jonathan M. Scharff**

This article describes our Windows-based practice management software, The Practice Solution™ from EON Systems in Clearwater, FL. First, let me supply you with a little bit of my background. My wife has been a physical therapist for more than twenty-five years (I have learned that if I say exactly how many years, there is a risk of getting smacked, so it is to be avoided at all costs). After college, with an electronics background and six years of electronics in the military, I’ve spent the past fifteen years working and consulting for medical offices of all specialties. I have been involved almost from the beginning of computers and software in healthcare, initially with DOS- and UNIX-based systems, all the way to the present with Macintosh-, Windows-, and Internet-based practice management systems. Over the years, after spending considerable time working and studying the needs of individual offices, I have suggested many different configurations and systems.

In 2001, my wife and I finally said to ourselves, “Why don’t we put our money where our mouths are, and open our own practice?” Fortunately, she is an excellent physical therapist with a wonderful reputation, which is a sound foundation to start with. But what software would we use? I put the same concerted effort and tools that I had learned computerizing many other offices into play for our own.

I cannot stress enough the importance of this decision. The choice of a practice management software and hardware configuration can be disastrous to a growing practice if careful consideration and long-term growth are not calculated into the plan. Most of you have some type of system; whether it is good or bad, imagine the cost and difficulty in switching. Not a fun prospect.

At the start of our practice I was looking for a system that was the “best bang for the buck.” I knew that we didn’t have ten to thirty thousand dollars to invest into a full computer network system, but I needed a system that could grow with us when we reached our goals. I wanted a system that didn’t have a significant cost associated with it every time we added another employee or practitioner. I wanted a system that didn’t dollar us to death with additional module costs after module costs. I also wanted a system that allowed for electronic documentation (a whole article in itself). Yes, this was asking for a lot from a computer software company, but I found it at EON Systems with their software, The Practice Solution.

The strengths of this software to a beginning practice and to an established practice are difficult to fit into one article. For the beginning practice, EON Systems offers a full version of their software that runs on a single computer at a significantly reduced cost. They also offer a version that allows for the input of 300 patients at a significantly reduced cost, allowing the beginning practice to generate income before investing in a full software and network server version. Very forward thinking from the folks at EON. We started with the full software version installed on a single computer. In six months, our practice had grown enough to invest in a server, and we upgraded seamlessly to the full server version. With the full server version, there is no cost associated with adding employees or practitioners and only a minimal charge to add workstations. This allows your practice to grow without continually dumping additional dollars into your software.

As with most practice management software systems, one of the most important considerations is "Does it work?" You would not believe how many types of software I have seen that have huge "holes" in them. Not so with The Practice Solution. This software seamlessly integrates scheduling, patient information, claim information, charging, and billing. EON systems' concept is the "Main Loop," which follows the standard practice flow for patients. First, a patient's demographic information is entered into the system and the schedule. Second, when the patient arrives at the office, the front desk staff simply double-clicks on that appointment and the background is changed to pink, instantly alerting all staff that the patient has arrived. After treatment, a double-click on the pink appointment will make the charge screen (or in this software, the services entry screen) automatically appear, loaded with today's date, that patient's diagnoses, and the like. You simply have to select today's charges. But it gets even easier—you can group charges, so that if you typically charge three or four modalities each visit then you only have to select the single grouped charge and it automatically charges the three or four modalities. There is even a "copy previous charges" button that copies the previous visit charges with a single click (we use this feature the most). This patient charge section works so fast that we have the physical therapists post the charges themselves, eliminating the need for router or fee slips and the need to store these slips for years. After charging the patient, the system automatically opens the "future appointments" screen where you can see a calendar of the patient's scheduled appointments for several months in a single page view. No more forgetting to schedule that patient or reminding them of their next appointment!

Patient demographics, scheduling, and charging are only part of what you need a complete software system to do for you. Patient billing with the choice of multiple statement layouts and claims processing are equally important to a successful practice. The Practice Solution offers forward-thinking solutions to these aspects of your practice management software, too! Claims can be

processed electronically or on paper. Unique to The Practice Solution is the Insurance Follow-Up Center, which automatically sorts claims by the length of time that they are outstanding and allows you to reprint insurance forms and document follow-up calls to insurance companies all in one easy-to-use area!

As I stated earlier, we also use the electronic documentation offered by EON Systems called Documentor. This is another component of EON's package for the full digital office. We haven't had a paper chart in six years and we haven't looked back! Why should we, after getting many comments sent back to us by referring physicians and insurance companies (yes, insurance companies) stating, "Great documentation!" I can honestly say that we have never had a claim rejected due to documentation, and as we all know in this day and age of managed care and rampant insurance denials, that is saying something.

It is hard to write a concise article about software that is so extensive. I haven't mentioned the integrated message center, the great telephone support staff, the huge report section, or the built in query section that allows you to query any information in the system. I haven't mentioned that every report is fully customizable or that many screens have user-definable fields so your practice can configure the system to your liking. I haven't mentioned that the Documentor works on a tablet or a desktop and is 100 percent customizable. I haven't mentioned that our practice has grown to multiple offices with a much bigger staff than just my wife and I, and that this software has grown seamlessly with us. Has EON Systems stopped there? No, as I saw at the PPS Annual Conference this past November in San Diego, CA—there is a new "soon to be released" version as well as a new electronic patient sign-in machine. It is similar to a credit card machine in a store that allows a patient's electronic signature to be stored, eliminating the paper sign-in sheet. What will they think of next? Hopefully, I have piqued your interest enough to give The Practice Solution and Documentor from EON Systems a long, hard look. Choose EON Systems and your practice will benefit from creative professional software programmers as much as our practice has.

*Jonathan M. Scharff is administrator at The Rehabilitation Center in Princeton, NJ. He can be reached at [therehabcenter@comcast.net](mailto:therehabcenter@comcast.net).*