

# Pediatric Associates of North Texas streamlines workflow and reduces costs with the IBM and Misys Express Solution for Healthcare Providers



So if the system worked, and was effective and safe for patients, why change it, particularly if changing meant risking patient care and revenue flow? There were several pressing reasons.

“I deal with young patients, but I also deal with their young parents,” explained Dr. Ashworth. “The digital world is a big part of their lives. They carry laptops. They use the Web. They expect things to be digital when they take their children to the doctor.”

Along with meeting her patients’ needs, Dr. Ashworth began thinking about her practice’s future. “If I brought in new doctors, chances are they’d want to work in a computerized office. Plus, if I wanted to sell the practice, potential buyers would want the office digital.” In the down-home way Texans talk, Dr. Ashworth said, “If you want to stick your head in the sand, go ahead. I didn’t want to, though.”

## Overview

### ■ The Challenge

*Replace a completely manual paper system that was inefficient and cumbersome with an integrated office computer infrastructure that lets pediatric physicians and office administrators perform their duties online*

### ■ The Solution

*An end-to-end solution bundle using the Misys Tiger practice management system and Misys EMR running on IBM Servers and Storage—accessed with Lenovo ThinkPad Tablets*

### ■ The Benefit

*Dramatic increase in efficiency and decrease in cost of doing business because all aspects of the practice are accessible online from one source. Now, the practice can spend more time on what is important – patient care*

On a typical day at Pediatric Associates of North Texas in Plano, Texas, Dr. Carolyn Ashworth and her staff would provide medical care the old-fashioned way: With paper charts and hand-written notes and prescriptions, and dictation tapes that needed transcribing. And if, say, a mother or an insurance carrier asked how many times a child had had strep throat, Dr. Ashworth would rifle through the file counting up the times before she gave her answer. Sometimes the file might not be handy. It might be in a stack at the front desk. Or with one of the two people who used the two desktop computers. But, it was a system that worked since 1981 when she started the practice, and it continued to work, albeit a bit slowly.

*“When I analyzed my cash flow, I was shocked to see how much money I was spending on paper, charts and transcription fees. When I factored that in, the IBM and Misys solution was going to be less on a monthly basis.”*

–Dr. Carolyn Ashworth

### **Going with proven, established vendors**

There are a lot of solutions available for a small practice like Dr. Ashworth's. “People are getting into healthcare because it's the hottest thing,” she said. “But I went right to IBM, though, because they have a name and a proven history of service and support. I knew if I had a problem I'd be able to call on them, because they weren't going to be out of business next year. There's a comfort in knowing there's a big company standing behind you.”

IBM and Misys Healthcare Systems have partnered to provide the IBM and Misys Express Solution for Healthcare Providers, offering a turnkey, end-to-end solution that combines electronic medical records (EMR) and patient management software with affordable servers and storage from IBM. The Misys Tiger Practice Management System and Electronic Medical Records run on the IBM System p5™ and System X™ servers. Patient information is stored on IBM System Storage™ N3700 and managed using

IBM Tivoli® Storage Manager Express middleware. Dr. Ashworth and her staff access patient information using Lenovo ThinkPad Tablets.

Designed with the help of a physician advisory board, the solution works the way physicians' offices operate, so workflow is familiar to doctors, reducing training time and speeding up return on investment.

The IBM and Misys solution is part of the IBM Express Advantage portfolio, designed specifically for mid-sized businesses that wish to innovate and gain a competitive advantage. IBM Express Advantage gives these organizations simplified access to the breadth of IBM and its business partners' expertise, technologies, offerings, skills and resources.

### **A system that works the way doctors work**

The IBM and Misys Express solution automated Dr. Ashworth's practice, streamlining and organizing the workflow of both front and back office staffs.

The system:

- Gives instant, secure access to patient information across the practice with its integrated Electronic Patient Record
- Streamlines office workflow and improves efficiency, enhancing staff satisfaction
- Improves reporting and financial operations
- Reduces administrative cost
- Provides full compliance with government regulations and privacy requirements

The solution eliminated all paper charts and transcription and gave instant access to patient information at the point of care through a wireless network. Physician notes are taken using predefined templates on Lenovo ThinkPad Tablets, and doctors chart the patient visit by selecting from glossaries and entering the vitals. Medications, allergies, problems and procedures can be added just as easily. Reports, including HIPAA security audit reports, are handled easily with a few keystrokes. Standard procedures such as scheduling and insurance ID card and patient eligibility validation are all done online at the front desk.

The issue of insurance was one of Dr. Ashworth's chief concerns because a practice like hers is paid primarily through insurance claims and is often reliant on third-party clearinghouses

for processing. An important benefit of the IBM/Misys partnership to Dr. Ashworth is that Misys owns its own clearinghouse. A single connection was all that was needed to ensure that Dr. Ashworth's revenue stream wasn't interrupted.

### **Streamlining the office and the bottom line**

What all of this means is that Dr. Ashworth's practice runs more smoothly and efficiently, and that is reflected in the bottom line. "There was a lot of wasted time simply looking for charts," said Dr. Ashworth. "We realized a huge savings in front office time. Also a huge savings in frustration."

"The new system gave us a huge cost savings. But more importantly, we were able to deliver better, faster, more efficient health care. Our level of care definitely improved."

### **A smooth implementation with no disruptions**

One of Dr. Ashworth's chief concerns was that implementing the system would disrupt her practice. By providing high-quality pediatric medical care, she relies on a steady revenue stream to pay normal business expenses such as the electric bill and salaries. Any interference in the day-to-day running of the office would be felt. Here's where the strong working relationship between

IBM and Misys, two established leaders in their particular areas of expertise, best serves the client.

"As much as we'd like to believe it's a plug-and-play world, it isn't," said Kevin Briggs, who managed the sale for Misys. Misys and IBM have a long history of working together, and years ago worked out the responsibilities expected from each company. It is because of their long-standing partnership that they can offer, install and maintain a high-quality end-to-end solution that the client relies upon to be fully operational and problem-free from the day they go live. As logical as it may sound, not every vendor would have made sure that the solution Dr. Ashworth ordered was preconfigured according to specifications outlined by Pediatric Associates, and tested to ensure everything was in working order before implementation.

Installation was performed during office hours and lasted only a couple of weeks, including training. "We had no disruption of patient flow or cash flow, and the staff embraced it enthusiastically," said Dr. Ashworth.

"When the technicians were here, we hardly noticed them. Everything worked out the way it had been promised to us."

The system is very intuitive; so much so that after two hours of training, Dr. Ashworth decided she needed to see patients, went into an examining room and immediately started using the system.

### **Positioned for the digital world**

Bringing her practice into the digital age was a big step for Dr. Ashworth, and if she likes, there's more to come. The next step would be a patient portal that Misys offers that further increases efficiency. Patients interact with the practice online, allowing them to do things like update information, request prescription refills, pay bills or request appointments.

For now, though, when a parent asks Dr. Ashworth how many times a child has had strep, the answer is at her fingertips. A small thing, perhaps. But a big difference in healthcare delivery. Because why keep parents waiting when it comes to answering a question about their children's health?

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—Dr. Carolyn Ashworth



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