



CAPE COD TIMES

May 16, 2007

Cape clinic goes paperless

By CYNTHIA McCORMICK



WELLFLEET — Outer Cape Health Services is saying goodbye to the rows of medical files stacked floor to ceiling in its front office.

Its physicians are tossing aside prescription pads stuffed in desk drawers.

And instead of writing blood pressure results on a scrap of paper, Outer Cape medical assistants are typing the numbers into a computer.

Welcome to the brave new world of the paperless medical office, where doctors carry hand-held computers instead of dog-eared medical charts and “e-prescriptions” are issued directly to the pharmacy.

“It’s all one electronic system,” said Henry N. Tuttle, chief executive officer of Outer Cape Health Services Inc. “We’ve been paperless since we went live on May 7.”

Outer Cape Health Services, a federally funded, nonprofit community health center, is using a \$500,000 electronic medical record and practice management system designed by eClinicalWorks of Westboro to electronically unite the front and back offices.

As soon as patients walk in the door, they set sail on an electronic tide of information.

Yesterday was the formal unveiling of Outer Cape’s new electronic medical record system. State Sen. Robert O’Leary, D-Barnstable, and Rep. Sarah Peake, D-Provincetown, went along for the ride.

O’Leary saw how medical assistant Jan Worthington would type his heart rate, blood pressure, weight and even pain rating into a computer.

When Dr. Umar Khan entered the exam room, he has all that information — plus the rest of the patient’s medical history — on a Tablet PC.

Instead of putting pen to paper, Khan enters information including diagnosis, prescriptions and billing level into his five-pound PC.

“It makes it more seamless,” said Dr. Joely Edwards, who had Peake — an actual Outer Cape patient — as a demonstration patient yesterday.

Tuttle says the electronic system also keeps track of when patients with chronic conditions need to have blood work done or see the doctor.

“It’s information at your fingertips,” said Mahesh Navani, co-founder of eClinicalWorks. “There’s no more running around looking for charts.”

About half of all community health centers in Massachusetts are using electronic medical records, compared with about 10 to 15 percent of primary care physicians statewide, Tuttle said.

As soon as Outer Cape gets a security system in place, patients will be able to check their lab results and make appointments electronically.

For now, the paperless system may take some getting used to.

Dr. Stephen T. Lacy, the medical director of Outer Cape Health Services, says he makes a point of educating patients about what he is doing on his Tablet PC.

“I’m not reading e-mail,” he said he tells them. “I’m looking up their lab results.”