

eClinicalWorks

# CASE STUDY



## **ARKANSAS HEART HOSPITAL OF LITTLE ROCK**

A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AND AWARD-WINNING HOSPITAL  
DEDICATED TO THE PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT  
OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

*improving healthcare together*

# Arkansas Heart Hospital, Little Rock, Arkansas

Committed to Enhancing the Cardiovascular Health of Arkansans

## The Challenge

Arkansas Heart Hospital, nationally recognized specialists in cardiac care, needed to find a healthcare IT partner capable of helping fulfill their mission of excellence through innovation, accountability through ownership, resilience without compromise, and teamwork with results.

## The Solution

With the implementation of eClinicalWorks, Arkansas Heart Hospital enjoyed on-site training, free data conversion, and an EHR with custom-made worksheets and features focused on the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease

## The Results

Arkansas Heart Hospital physicians and clinicians now have the technology and analytics they need — including mobile and messaging tools — to provide top-quality cardiac care. Within two years of switching to eClinicalWorks, the practice had seen a 22% increase in patient volume.

## A Changing Healthcare IT Landscape

Rarely has American medicine seen a more dramatic revolution than during the decade between 2005 and 2015, with the widespread adoption of electronic medical records.

In 2008, fewer than 10% of all hospitals in the United States had even a basic Electronic Health Record (EHR) in place, according to data compiled by the federal Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC).<sup>1</sup>

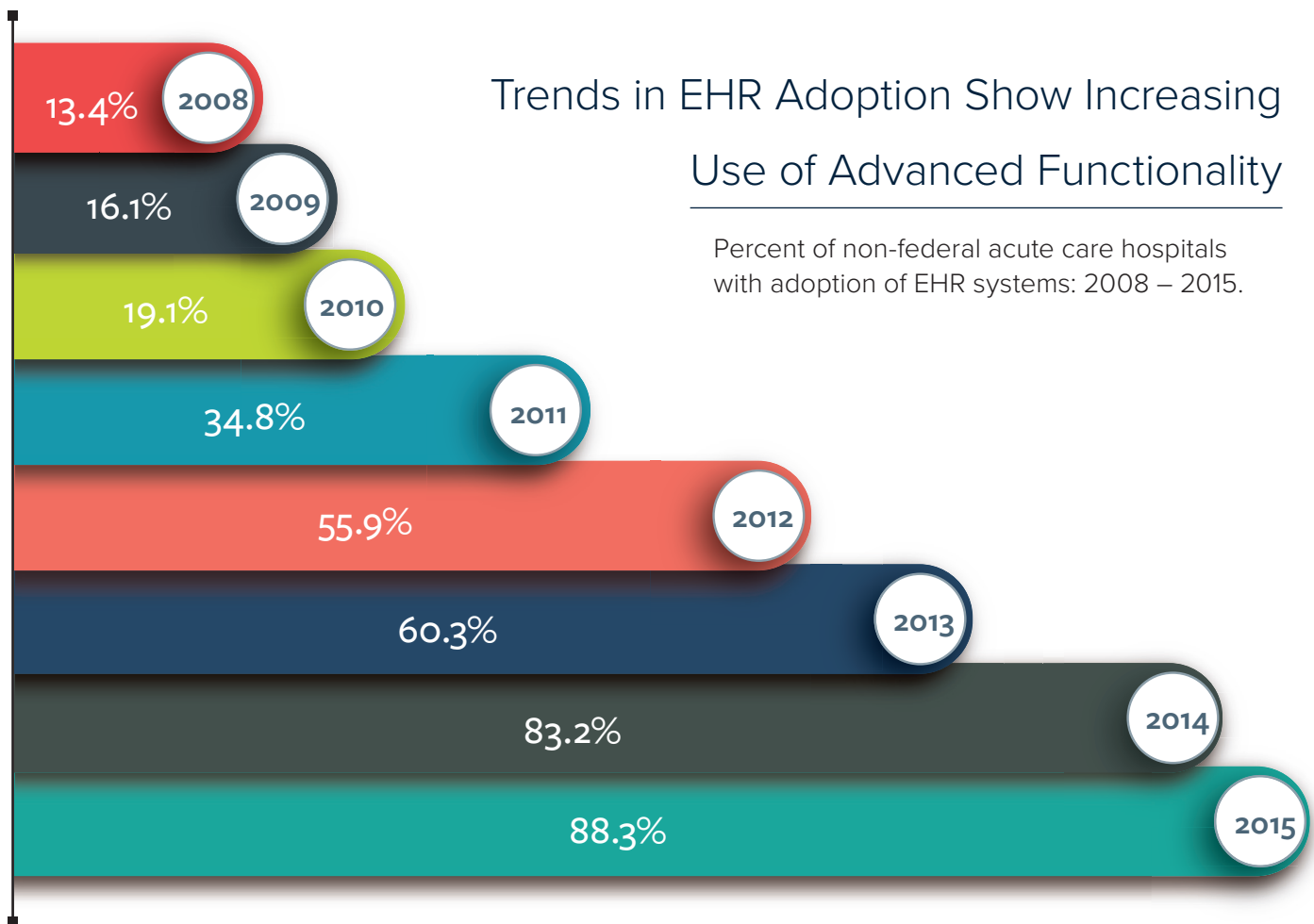
By 2015, adoption was nearly universal. Even among smaller, rural hospitals, more than 80% had at least a basic EHR system in place. The nation's largest and most specialized hospitals had moved still more rapidly, with 96% having embraced the advanced functionalities of a certified EHR system — defined as one that meets the “technological capability, functionality, and security requirements adopted by the Department of Health and Human Services,” according to ONC.

But nearly as rapid and widespread as the growth of EHR itself has been the rate of system conversions, as hospitals and medical practices of all sizes have realized that their first choice of an EHR vendor was either not the best choice, or simply no longer served their needs in a rapidly changing field.

A May 2014 article in Information Week noted that by 2016, 50% of the more than 5,700 large hospitals in the U.S. planned to switch to a different EHR company.<sup>2</sup> Conversions are being driven by many factors, including government mandates that require healthcare providers to demonstrate quality and effectiveness. With the challenges and opportunities of government incentive programs — and ever-shifting payment models — many hospitals have found that their initial vendor is not able to keep pace, from the basic need for

<sup>1</sup> <http://dashboard.healthit.gov/evaluations/data-briefs/non-federal-acute-care-hospital-ehr-adoption-2008-2015.php>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.informationweek.com/healthcare/electronic-health-records/ehr-swaps-coming-for-many-healthcare-organizations/d/d-id/1251118>



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fast and reliable data retrieval, to integration with other vendors, to the advantages and efficiencies that come with secure, cloud-based storage of data.

### Cardiovascular Excellence in Little Rock

Arkansas Heart Hospital, a leader in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease, was an early adopter of electronic healthcare IT. When founded in 1997, AHH was the first hospital in Arkansas devoted exclusively to cardiovascular health, and only the second such hospital nationwide.

“We operate a 100-bed specialty hospital here in Little Rock, Arkansas, and we have 33 outreach clinics across the state,” said Jennifer Styron-Ripa, Chief Financial Officer. “We pride ourselves on some very strong values, high expectations in quality, excellence through innovation, accountability through ownership, resilience without compromise, and teamwork with results. And those values and our culture are critical to everything that we do here.”

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— Jennifer Styron-Ripa,  
Chief Financial Officer,  
Arkansas Heart Hospital

In addition to values and culture, Arkansas Heart Hospital also relies heavily upon its EHR to fulfill its mission. And there lay an obstacle to the hospital’s continuing progress.

“Our previous EHR vendor, NextGen, was just that, it was a vendor,” Styron-Ripa said. “It wasn’t a partner. We had had very unsatisfactory technical support, very, very high fees for modules and different things that were added to the system. And a lot of the promises the vendor made just didn’t come to fruition in terms of the advances in technology. It wasn’t working out. We needed a tool that was going to help us progress.”

So, three years ago, after a five-year relationship with NextGen, Arkansas Heart Hospital began seeking an alternative.

“Our physicians needed to be able to easily go through the Progress Note, easily be able to retrieve things,” Styron-Ripa said. “And with regard to the patient’s record, we do so many procedures here, and there are so many components of their record, we need them to be able to find those things intuitively. And it needed to be affordable as well.”

## Seeking a True Healthcare Partner

Simply stated, Arkansas Heart Hospital sought a partner as dedicated to excellence as the hospital itself.

“It’s not well known to a lot of consumers that hospitals pay for a lot of awards that they use to advertise,” Styron-Ripa added. “We don’t do that here at Arkansas Heart Hospital. We spend our money on taking care of our patients, and providing the highest quality of care for them. And Medicare has actually recognized that two years in a row. We are number one in the nation in quality and patient satisfaction.”

In early 2016, Arkansas Heart Hospital was the only hospital in Arkansas to receive a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, a designation conferred upon fewer than 5% of Medicare-certified acute-care hospitals. The ratings are based upon results of the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/profile.html#profTab=1&ID=040134&state=AR&lat=0&lng=0&name=ARKANSAS%20HEART%20HOSPITAL%2C%20LLC&Distn=0.0>



The search for a new IT vendor would not be a simple matter, but would require extreme care, and a hands-on tryout.

“We opened it up, we looked at lots of vendors, narrowed it down to three, narrowed it down to two, and then once we narrowed it down to two, we actually brought those vendors in,” Styron-Ripa said. “We scheduled 15- to 30-minute meetings, some of them 45-minute meetings, with every single physician within this organization. I wanted them *not* to have the vendor present to them, I wanted them to sit in front of an office visit, and I wanted them to work through it and see how intuitive it would be for them. And the physicians were unanimous.”

That unanimous choice was eClinicalWorks.

## A Nearly Seamless Transition

The first task with the transition to eClinicalWorks was ensuring that all patient data was properly carried over from the previous EHR. For that, the free data conversion service that came with the eClinicalWorks EHR proved to be critical for Arkansas Heart Hospital.

“Beyond the shadow of a doubt, it really was,” Styron-Ripa said. “It would have been an absolutely grave mistake for a practice of our size — especially with the amount of information that we had in the record and that was discrete — to not be able to bring that over. It would not have provided good quality of care to our patients.”

“But we brought over as many things discretely as I could even fathom,” she added. “I can’t think of one thing that we couldn’t bring over discretely, and all the documents were easily parsed out and put into very descriptive file folders in eClinicalWorks.”



Do Well  
Orchestrated  
EHR Systems  
Improve Patient  
Outcomes and  
Diagnostics



**When** health care providers have access to complete and accurate information, patients receive better medical care. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) can improve the ability to diagnose diseases and reduce—even prevent—medical errors, improving patient outcomes.

**A** national survey of doctors<sup>1</sup> who are ready for meaningful use offers important evidence:

**94%** of providers report that their EHR makes records readily available at the point of care.

report that their EHR produces **88%** clinical benefits for the practice.

**75%** of providers report that their EHR allows them to deliver better patient care.

1. Jamoom, E., Patel, V., King, J., & Furukawa, M. (2012, August). *National perceptions of ehr adoption: Barriers, impacts, and federal policies*. National conference on health statistics.

With efficient data conversion and onsite training, the process of transition, migration, and implementation was as seamless as possible.

But it was what happened next that made the critical difference: Physicians at Arkansas Heart Hospital were enthusiastic in embracing not only the basic EHR functions but the additional Practice Management and Patient Engagement tools, including eClinicalMobile and eClinicalMessenger.

## No More Whispers of ‘Scribe’

“Right now, eClinicalMobile is something that we’re talking a lot about,” Styron-Ripa said, “because a lot of our physicians are jumping on board with it. There are a couple of very, very busy physicians, who I’d heard the whisper of “scribe” from.”

Transcription work is, of course, essential for any medical practice, but hiring medical scribes is also time-consuming and adds to employment costs. It can also raise other issues, including legal questions and concerns, as summarized in a November 2012 report in the Journal of the American Health Information Management Association.<sup>4</sup>

“Well, once I heard them using eClinicalMobile, there was no further mention of that!” she added. “They find it incredibly quick and love to do it themselves.”

Another factor contributing to the success of the transition to eClinicalWorks was the cooperative nature of the venture. Arkansas Heart Hospital’s providers and staff not only enjoyed reliable access to all patient records, but began using a variety of worksheets custom-made for cardiovascular practice.

“Actually we pretty much helped design those worksheets from the very beginning,” Styron-Ripa said, “and so we knew eClinicalWorks at that point was a partner, from Day One. We do tons of outpatient procedures here in our clinics. We do cardiac catheterizations, nuclears, echos — and we have to be able to really document everything that happens in those procedures and testings, and are able to produce a document that we can send to referring physicians, and give to our patients. eClinicalWorks really understood the importance of that, and they made it happen for us. It really does take a very dedicated onsite team to make it successful, and we had that.”

4 <http://library.ahima.org/doc?oid=106220#.V36yRoSyPUO>



**H**ighest Expectations in  
Quality  
**E**xcellence Through  
Innovation  
**A**ccountability Through  
Ownership  
**R**esilience Without  
Compromise  
**T**eamwork With Results

## Steady Growth and a Bright Future

Two years after making the switch to eClinicalWorks, Arkansas Heart Hospital was enjoying growth and success, measured both by the quality of care provided, and the volume of patients treated at the hospital and its many affiliated clinics.

Effective integration was a key to the quality piece.

“The physicians will order a particular lab within eClinicalWorks,” Styron-Ripa said. “It then transmits into the lab system, basically a work list of sorts. The test is performed, the results are then transferred back to the physician for them to review, and then you can post it to the Portal.”

The same holds true for other systems, including echocardiograms.

“The physicians can order in the system, the order gets transmitted into a work list on the actual echo unit itself,” she said. “The sonographer picks the patient, does the echo, and when it’s complete, it sends a notification to the physician to they can go in and dictate and process it.

Workflows improvements like that — which were difficult or impossible to achieve with the hospital’s previous EHR — have resulted in higher patient volumes, with no loss of quality.

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“eClinicalWorks and Arkansas Heart Hospital have grown significantly over the last two years,” Styron-Ripa said. “In the first fiscal year post-Go-Live, we actually increased our clinic volume by 8%. In the second fiscal year post-Go-Live, we increased an additional 13%. With those types of increases? You just can’t really do that with an ineffective partnership or ineffective tools.”

And what role will healthcare IT and eClinicalWorks play for Arkansas Heart Hospital in the future?

“We’re going to continue to provide the best quality of care for our patients,” she said. “That’s first and foremost for us. You know, how technology and analytics plays into that in this world of Big Data? That’s yet to be seen. But we know that with eClinicalWorks we have a partnership and will be able to be successful together.” ■

# ARKANSAS HEART HOSPITAL

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## CLINICS

Arkadelphia Clinic	Hope Clinic
Benton Clinic	Hot Springs Clinic
Cabot Clinic	Little Rock Clinic
Camden Clinic	Magnolia Clinic
Conway Clinic	McGehee Clinic
Danville Clinic	Mena Clinic
Clarksville Clinic	Monticello Clinic
Crossett Clinic	Mountain Home Clinic
DeQueen Clinic	Mountain View Clinic
DeWitt Clinic	Nashville Clinic
Dumas Clinic	North Little Rock Clinic
El Dorado Clinic	Russellville Clinic
Fordyce Clinic	Searcy Clinic
Helena - West Helena Clinic	Warren Clinic