

Meeting the challenge of... Change Management

An **xwaveEMR** case study

The challenge

Adopting new information technology in any environment can be a hurdle, but especially in a healthcare setting where operational workflows revolve around human care. The Elliot Lake Family Health Team in Elliot Lake, Ontario faced this challenge in 2007 when approximately 30 staff (or 10 practitioners) consolidated to form one FHT. Previously working in three different clinics, they had been using various IT systems — to varying degrees.

“Of the four physicians at my original clinic, two were using the EMR, one was using just the prescription component, and the other was using nothing at all,” explains Dr. Christine Pun, a physician at Elliot Lake FHT and the main driver behind its adoption of a single electronic medical record, **xwaveEMR**.

The **xwaveEMR** solution

“In choosing the new system, we looked at the size of the company, how responsive it was, and its market share — we wanted to be sure that whatever we chose would be well-supported,” says Pun. The selection process began with some preliminary research on vendors, followed by site visits and demonstrations, and finally short-listing down to two finalists. “By that point, my role had changed from one of leader to facilitator,” explains Pun. “While I initially drove the project, when it came to making the actual selection, I wanted that choice to come from my colleagues.” Their final consensus was overwhelmingly in favour of **xwaveEMR**.

One of the key reasons behind the selection was ease-of-use. Pun offers some examples: “Ordering lab work is easy: we simply check off the test and the Ontario lab requisition is printed out — all the patient and physician information is on it. The forms are user-friendly — SOAP, for instance, and the Rourke and prenatal forms. And compared with our previous system, billing from the EMR by physicians is now much easier.” She also notes the Microsoft® Windows interface: “Accessing documents is easy, as they’re tiered in document trees the way they would be in normal Windows operations.”

Another reason for choosing the solution is its application service provider (ASP) format. As an ASP — one of the first of its kind in Ontario — **xwaveEMR** is delivered as a web service: it’s provided to subscribers via the Internet and is fully managed and maintained by **xwave**. “We didn’t want the burden of having to look after and update the EMR ourselves,” says Dr. Pun. “We also liked the ASP’s remote access — it’s a real advantage.” She adds, “I can be at home in the evening putting my daughter to bed yet still be able to look at a patient’s chart or check for lab results.”

In adopting the new system, Pun worked with **xwave** to develop an implementation schedule, breaking it down into stages that would help ensure key milestones could be met. The first stage was pre-loading / scheduling / billing — loading paper-based information into the EMR, then familiarizing users, particularly support staff, with the billing and scheduling components. Stage two, rolled out several months later, focused on the scanning, indexing and electronic-lab capabilities. Stage three, currently underway, aims to get users on the prescription module. After that, says Pun, adoption becomes more a matter of practice and getting the physicians comfortable with clinical note-entry. “And that’s something they can learn in their own time.”

The outcome: Faster information retrieval, improved disease management and a shorter workday

The Elliot Lake FHT has grown since 2007, with **xwaveEMR** currently supporting a total of about 50 users, including physicians, support staff and allied health professionals. Christine Pun says that of the 10 doctors using the system, four are completely paperless and the remaining six are in varying degrees of adoption. Any new staff coming on board are expected to go paperless.

“There is a learning curve involved, and part of the success of implementation depends on respecting everyone’s varying comfort levels and speed of uptake.” She adds that the nurses and support staff can be effective champions of the new system because they tend to be heavier users. “They will often ask a physician to try a new method or use a new template because ‘it’s the way we do it and it’s faster.’”

Benefits have ranged from improved tracking of immunization and chronic disease such as diabetes, to faster information retrieval, reduced paper loss and a shortened workday. “Just finding a piece of paper in a file was a common problem,” says Pun. “We deal with anywhere from 30 to 100 such pieces per doctor per day, and with the scanning and indexing in the EMR, we know the information is in the correct patient chart and can be quickly retrieved.” She estimates **xwaveEMR** has shortened her workday by up to an hour. “I can be finished documenting my encounter, doing a prescription, making a lab requisition, writing a referral and sending any necessary follow-up messages to staff — often by the time the patient leaves the room.”

HOW IT WORKS

xwaveEMR as an application service provider (ASP) model

- An ASP solution is one where the software is subscribed to as a web service and accessed via the Internet (compared with a ‘stand-alone’ solution that’s purchased and maintained by users in-house)
- An ASP is fully managed and maintained by the service provider — this includes site assessment and planning, all necessary training, software updates, change management and ongoing technical support such as a 24/7 helpdesk
- The ASP format eases the burden of maintenance for users, eliminates the need to purchase costly in-house equipment such as servers, and it allows for easy scalability: new features and users often can be changed or added through a simple phone call to the service provider
- The software can be accessed wherever Internet is available — office, home, hospital, hotel room
- xwaveEMR** is one of the first funding-eligible web-based EMRs to be launched in Ontario; it’s deployed via eHealth Ontario’s secure ONE™ Network and has been used by physicians across the province since 2005
- It is funding eligible under Ontario’s Physician IT Program

“xwave provided very good support throughout the implementation and continues to be responsive to any ongoing questions or concerns that come up.”

Dr. Christine Pun
Elliot Lake Family Health Team

About xwave Healthcare

xwave Healthcare is the winner of two ITAC-Health awards Company of the Year (2006), and Project Implementation Team of the Year (2008) for its work with Cancer Care Ontario on the Wait Time Information System (WTIS). Drawing from almost 40 years of experience, the practice comprises over 300 medical, technical and business consultants all guided by a Medical Advisory Board of physicians who provide direction and counsel on a voluntary basis. Together they develop solutions and services that connect providers with patients and promote efficiency across the entire continuum of care.

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