

# Rx for success



*Family Medicine  
Associates of Augusta*

## Family Medicine Practice Earns \$90k in Meaningful Use Funds

They say the third time's a charm, right? This was certainly the case with Family Medicine Associates of Augusta and their experience with EMR systems. By the time the five-physician practice finally installed Centricity last fall, the group had already tried two other EMRs.

Now, six months later, all five doctors have certified for Meaningful Use and the practice has received \$90,000 — \$18,000 per physician — from the Medicare & Medicaid EHR Incentive Program.

What took them so long to go with Centricity? “The doctors liked the GE software a long time ago, and appreciated the stability of GE as a company, but they didn't think we could afford Centricity,” said Kelly Litchfield, office manager. “Now we're actually making more money.”

### Better Coding = More Income

The Centricity decision was in part motivated by the possibility of meeting Meaningful Use criteria. “We knew Centricity would help us qualify for the incentive, which would help offset the cost of the system,” Litchfield explained. “While we dreaded another EMR transition, we knew it was the right thing to do. And now we're actually making more money because the system helps the physicians code correctly. Prior to Centricity, we had a tendency to undercode our patient visits, which meant we were cheating ourselves out of a lot of reimbursements.”

Litchfield says the practice is also hooked on Centricity's reporting capabilities. “The system automatically picks up the Obs Terms data,” she said, “so we can immediately see whether we're doing what we're supposed to be doing for Meaningful Use.”

### Focus on Reimbursement First

Unlike their prior EMR installations, the Centricity implementation went very smoothly. “HealthSystems focused on reimbursement first,

so we wouldn't have a lapse in collections. That made a huge difference for us,” Litchfield said. “With prior EMR transitions, the doctors didn't get paid for weeks. With this implementation, we didn't really even see a dip in revenue.”

The rollout was also paced to allow the doctors to get accustomed to the system. “We rolled out the system one doctor at a time, so our productivity wasn't impacted to any noticeable degree. That was very effective and made everyone feel very comfortable. All the kinks were worked out quickly.”

The doctors and staff also spent time offsite to train on the system. “The HealthSystems implementation team was here for a whole week helping us get up and running,” said Litchfield. “We spent one day offsite — out of the office setting, away from the phones — so we could really pay attention to learning.

“HealthSystems' training was excellent,” she added. “They really gave us a high level of confidence in our ability to use the system.”

### Add-Ons Enhance Customization

The practice uses a number of Centricity add-ons to make the system fit their workflow, including Dragon Medical speech recognition software, DocuTrak, eRx and customized clinical forms. The group is now working on a bi-directional lab interface, which should be ready to go soon.

According to Litchfield, Centricity has made an enormous difference in the practice. “Centricity makes everything easy,” she said. “The doctors and patients are happy. Our practice is thriving. We should have chosen Centricity years ago!”

## At A Glance

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