



# Randolph Medical Center Improves Patient Care with Easy-to-Use EHR and a Single Patient Chart

SUCCESS STORY

## Introduction

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One of the most important goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 is to increase the use of technology to reduce long-term costs and improve patient care. However, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers' Health Research Institute, more than half of the estimated \$ 2.2 trillion spent on healthcare in the United States per year is attributed to wasteful spending, with over \$80 billion accounting for ineffective technology. Thus, the importance of vendor selection and usability of key technologies – specifically with an electronic health record (EHR) solution – is vital.

In fact, usability is such a key factor to the success of an EHR implementation that HIMSS has created an EHR Usability Task Force. This group defines usability as the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction with which specific users can achieve a specific set of tasks in a particular environment.

Usability has played an important role in the success of the EHR implementation at Randolph Medical Center. According to interim CEO, Michael Parsons, it's the ease-of-use of the organization's EHR that has helped to improve patient care and positively impact their bottom line.

## Background

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The EHR market is both extensive and complex. From multiple data interchange and reporting standards, to formatting and encoding standards, to clinical processes and procedures – not to mention the complex government organizations and legislation – it can be difficult to get it right. For rural community hospitals, selecting a technology partner becomes even more important because their needs are unique and their budget is limited. These challenges were very familiar to Randolph Medical Center.

“Two years ago, we still had computers with floppy drives,” said Michael Tipsword, director of strategic development. “We were so far behind technologically but we didn't have the funds to improve our computers.”

Owned by the eastern Alabama city of Roanoke, Randolph Medical Center has been serving the population of 6,000 residents since 1952. The critical access facility has 25 beds with 212 employees and five physicians on site.

In 2006, the hospital's CEO began serious discussions surrounding the funding for an EHR solution. He was the facility's driving force toward EHR, convinced it was the future of healthcare and the only way the healthcare provider could survive and thrive in the increasingly challenging healthcare market.

Randolph Medical Center began a formal search of EHR providers. Throughout the selection process, the organization established a review team, took part in several hospital site visits and developed a scorecard system to rank each vendor.

“We had our director of nursing looking at the clinical side of each EHR solution; the CFO looking at the accounting side and our CEO looking at the integration of all of those components to make sure the solution would run smoothly,” said Parsons. “We were down to two providers and then presented our findings to the board. We decided to go with Healthland because we were impressed by the customer service and the pricing.”

“Randolph Medical Center is a great example of a hospital looking at their needs for the long term,” said Angie Franks, Healthland Senior Vice President of Sales and Market Development. “The facility had already been using an application from another vendor, but selected Healthland because we better aligned with their strategic vision.”

## Challenges

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A significant element of Randolph Medical Center's strategic vision is to provide quality patient care for its community – an area that had become increasingly difficult without the appropriate technology. Although the majority of the staff at Randolph Medical Center understood the benefits an EHR implementation would have on the community and patient care, changes in technology can be daunting for any organization – particularly in the rural healthcare environment. The healthcare provider faced many challenges during the process including: the use and maintenance of paper records; the level of IT literacy among hospital personnel; employee resistance of new technology; an aggressive implementation timeline and the hospital's outdated hardware infrastructure.

### Use and Maintenance of Paper Medical Records:

Immediate access to a patient's medical records is important in any healthcare environment; however, there are additional concerns in a rural healthcare setting where patients do not regularly see the same physicians due to the hospital's rotating schedules. It's a reality that can be incredibly trying for both the patient and healthcare provider.

"Some of the challenges that we were incurring, as far as patient care goes, was following paper charts," said Parsons. "Keeping track of those records was delaying patient care and a lot of wasted time for our patients being in a room with doctors not knowing what was going on with them at that given time. It was becoming a big issue." The storage and maintenance of the paper records was also troublesome. Randolph Medical Center was storing paper records from the last four decades and was forced to maintain, update and eliminate the documents as necessary through the years. This was a substantial expense for the hospital in both storage costs and resources required to maintain the records.

### IT Literacy and Employee Resistance:

"Some of the problems we had here at Randolph Medical Center prior to getting electronic health records, quite honestly, were technology and the level of technology awareness of our people," said Tipsword. "We had a lot of personnel that were just not that familiar with computers. They were great doctors, great nurses, great admin people, but when it came to technology, they had never been exposed to it on this level before."

Limited IT literacy among hospital employees can lead to resistance as an organization looks to upgrade technology. Often a difficult barrier to overcome, Randolph Medical Center's CEO says communication and customer support are key. "With any system integration, you have some push back from some of the employees that have been used to the old system and have used it for years," said Parsons. "However, with the help of Healthland's customer support, each one of my department directors who use Healthland on a daily basis, are always able to get answers for their questions. People are enjoying the system and the ease of use is fantastic."

Fortunately, Randolph Medical Center also had the support from one of its leading physicians immediately. "As one of the full time physicians here, I thought it was important to have one of us involved from day one," said Dr. Joseph Singleton, Randolph Medical Center M.D. "I also wanted to be on the front end of learning the technology and I wanted to go through the process with everyone else. And, I'm so glad I did."

Buy-in from hospital staff – particularly physicians – is essential as the organization looks to achieve meaningful use. "Physicians are becoming increasingly crucial to the selection of healthcare IT and they are key to achieving meaningful use as doctors are now required to enter their orders through a CPOE (computerized physician order entry) system," said Franks. "If these new standards are not met, a hospital's meaningful use funds could be at risk."

### Aggressive Implementation Deadlines:

Another challenge Randolph Medical Center faced was extremely tight deadlines. "We received a federal grant that made it possible for us to implement an EHR solution, however, we were on a tight deadline to make it happen," said Tipsword.

To meet the criteria of its federal grant, the healthcare provider had just 18 months to complete implementation. "If we had the choice, we would've slowed down our timeline and spaced the implementation of each solution," said Parsons. "Healthland's support helped us get through it. Anytime we had a question or issue, they were there for us."

## Implementation

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Today, Randolph Medical Center is using the Healthland EHR solution in virtually every area of the organization. “We bought everything,” said Tipsword. “We’ve implemented every product and every module that Healthland had, all the way from the new emergency department software to the hospital applications including doctor’s documentation. Our nursing department is using COWs (Computers on Wheels) when they see patients to document information. We’re also moving onto medical scans for prescriptions for the patients as well.”

Overall, hospital officials say the Healthland EHR implementation was a success, listing staff training; client service; usability of the system and EHR champions as key factors in their achievement.

### Staff Training and Client Service:

Staff training is essential to the success of an EHR implementation and not only requires a comprehensive instructional process, but committed teams from the vendor and the healthcare provider, as well as responsive client service.

“Healthland electronic health records have been very easy on our personnel, once they learned the basics,” said Tipsword. “Once they took the classes, they felt like they could navigate around it and use it even if they weren’t computer savvy prior to training classes. We’ve had some learning curve but it’s been nothing our IT staff couldn’t help them out with. They’d walk them through a few times and they picked it up pretty quickly.”

“The Healthland training and support has been helpful,” added Carson Holbrook, Randolph Medical Center IT Director. “People with minimal skills are now using the system. Once they had completed training that initial learning gap closed.”

“We had a lot of good cooperation throughout our hospital and a lot of help from Healthland to get people trained on the schedule we needed to,” added Tipsword. “Healthland worked with us very diligently to make sure we had everything set up and were doing it in the timeframe our grant required.”

### Usability:

The ease of use of an EHR solution is an important component during the implementation period and beyond.

As part of ARRA, the stimulus funds of \$19 billion to drive the adoption of electronic health records between 2011 and 2015 are expected to increase the adoption by physicians from 17 percent today to 90 percent by 2015. Yet, that adoption rate will greatly depend on the usability of the EHR solution.

“As far as usability goes, the Healthland solution is very user-friendly,” said Parsons. “It is self explanatory and that has been amazing with efficiency in billing and with EHR. It has helped our doctors with their rounds and has increased patient care and the overall financial stand point of the hospital.”

### EHR Champions:

Randolph healthcare officials advise gaining buy-in and securing an EHR champion prior to the implementation. They also recommend communicating plans across the organization from the department heads to the employees on the floor using the system.

“The more buy-in you have at the upper levels and the more people feel good about the software and the fact you’re implementing electronic health records, the better off you’ll be in the long run,” said Tipsword. “If your people who will be using the system don’t feel like upper management has bought into the system or the doctors have not bought into it, you’ll have more problems implementing the software. I would suggest making sure everyone is comfortable with it and everybody was happy to see it coming and really working with it.”

### 10 Must-Haves to a Successful Implementation:

Most hospitals implementing an EHR, like Randolph Medical Center, have limited resources to manage the communication and change management processes associated with a major implementation. Yet, timely communication to internal and external stakeholders is vital. Based on input from executives and project leads over the past several years, Healthland has developed a list of ten “must-haves” to make an EHR implementation a success:

1. Committed Leadership– that believes in the project and supports its outcomes
2. Effective and Constant Communication – among each other and with the vendor
3. Budget– to do it right the first time
4. Ability to Change Objectives as Project Changes– by building flexibility and contingencies into the project design
5. Highly Motivated, Accountable and Trained staff– a great cross-department team produces great results
6. Time Management Skills– to help the team prioritize and deliver quality work by established deadlines
7. Steering Committee– to oversee project objectives and outcomes
8. Dedicated On-site Project Manager– for day-to-day decisions and supervision
9. Project Plan– with defined scope and timeline of key milestones
10. Project Goal– to keep everyone’s eye on the target and strive toward common results

## The Healthland Solution

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The Healthland EHR solution enables healthcare providers to quickly and easily access a comprehensive view of demographic, historical and clinical patient information from multiple care settings within the healthcare system – hospital, clinic, home health and long-term care. The instant access to patient data helps improve patient care and reduce the risk of medical errors, and the unique single patient chart is accessible in one integrated system, real time, creating operational efficiencies, improved communication and reduced cost.

“For the patient presenting to the ER with several medical problems, it is a challenge when you don’t have all of their medical information,” said Dr. Singleton. “When you have that information available through EHR, it’s less frustrating and you feel better about caring for the patient because you have that relevant knowledge. We can now also access information from another facility which is a definite benefit. We are often the first responder and that additional information can provide what we need in a life threatening situation.”

“One patient chart across the continuum of care is critical in the rural environment,” concluded Franks. “These hospitals often own the clinic and long-term care facility and many of the area residents are here from cradle to grave. One patient chart enables more accurate, up-to-date information that enables safe patient care.”



### Outdated Infrastructure:

The facility's outdated infrastructure was another issue that had to be addressed prior to an EHR implementation. Not only did the hospital use archaic computers with floppy drives, the hardware wiring was run from one room to another with routers.

"Because of the wiring, you'd get to the end of the hall and somebody's internet had shut down and you didn't know why," added Tipsword. "Then, you'd go two offices back and find out that a router had been unplugged."

In the end, the facility updated the entire system and installed a new server room.

## Results

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With the Healthland EHR solution, Randolph Medical Center is now positioned to drive new clinical and administrative efficiencies, streamline operations, reduce costs and improve the quality of patient care.

"EHR is good for patient care and safety," said Dr. Singleton. "We're more efficient with our rounds. Plus, the system allows me access to different disciplines involved in patient care and provides the information I need quickly."

IT Director, Carson Holbrook, defines Randolph Medical Center in the transitional phase in terms of reporting the complete return of investment of the EHR technology. However, he says the hospital is experiencing many benefits include increased efficiencies, improved patient care and decreased cost such as those incurred when storing paper medical records. He credits the system's usability and integration capabilities for the improvements. "As far as the usability of the system, when you get into the patient desktop and open the tabbed information about that patient – vital signs, progress notes, nurses' notes, notes from physicians, physician's orders – everything is right there at your fingertips and it's very easy to navigate," he said.

Holbrook also reports cost savings with the Healthland EHR integration to the hospital's PAC system. "With our offsite radiologists, we can broadcast information to them. There's increased productivity and a lot less confusion with patient data now. And, there's a lot less burden on my part to manage third-party interfaces. One phone call can take care of any issue now."

"As soon as the Healthland electronic health record solution was implemented, we saw a massive spike in our efficiency in terms of patient care," said Parsons. "As far as the business side goes, capturing charges has been a blessing here at the hospital."

"With paper charts, making sure the patients were getting the care they needed while capturing those charges was a problem. Now it's 99 percent efficiency as far as capturing charges go."

The healthcare provider's EHR initiative will also help strengthen its financial position by enabling them to qualify for significant meaningful use incentives under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"As far as a critical access hospital goes, our reimbursement rate is going to increase if we meet the meaningful use guidelines," concluded Parsons. "Healthland has definitely helped us get way ahead of the curve as far as implementation goes. We are currently reviewing the final meaningful use definition. However, we are very comfortable that we are already meeting that."



Want to learn more about the successful EHR implementation at Randolph Medical Center, visit [www.healthland.com/randolphmedicalcenter](http://www.healthland.com/randolphmedicalcenter).