



**Rocky Mountain  
Health Network Inc.**  
Leading in Healthcare Business Solutions



[www.rmhn.org](http://www.rmhn.org)

WINTER 2007

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### RMHN Mission Statement

*Rocky Mountain Health Network plays a key role in improving quality and cost efficiency over the full continuum of medical care. Our comprehensive business and management service options support medical providers and facilities.*

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

### EMR SUCCESS REQUIRES PLANNING



Mark Wakai,  
President/CEO

Political and advocacy groups across the country are encouraging the widespread adoption of electronic medical records (EMR). A growing body of evidence demonstrates that "going electronic" can make important improvements to healthcare: helping practices to run more efficiently, preventing medical errors, aiding in disease management programs and enhancing the overall quality of care.

Rocky Mountain Health Network is committed to helping its members move into the electronic age. Because EMR is not a "plug and play" solution, we're keeping an eye on the practical matters that hospitals and provider practices will face as they make the switch from paper to digital records.

While part of the EMR equation is securing new technology, an even greater investment is time: the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has found that the implementation of new healthcare technology requires more emphasis on organizational culture and work processes than on the technology itself. The agency advises investing in process redesign "on the front end" of EMR to save time over the long term.

AHRQ also identifies education and training as integral aspects of the planning, implementation and post-implementation stages of an EMR

project. Rocky Mountain Health Network has already expanded our IT department and created a Help Desk for users of our practice management software, and we'll continue to provide new resources and support systems as EMR use increases among our members.

We're keeping an  
**eye on the  
practical matters  
that hospitals  
and provider practices will  
face as they make the  
switch from paper to  
digital records.**

Though it's estimated that only 15% of physicians currently use EMR, the push is on for more providers nationwide to adopt the technology. Rocky Mountain Health Network will continue to increase our own expertise in order to help our members integrate EMR into clinical practice.

**NEW WEBSITE!**  
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# INDUSTRY

## News

### EXPECTED MEDICARE CUTS AVERTED

The 5% cut in Medicare reimbursement rates expected to take effect in 2007 was narrowly averted by a Congressional vote just before the legislature adjourned in December. This was largely due to intense lobbying by the AMA and other physician advocacy groups.

However, the freeze on most current reimbursement rates came with an unexpected provision. According to the new law, physicians who report they've taken certain quality measures, as defined by the government, will be rewarded with a 1.5% bonus. Beginning July 1, physicians can use 66 quality measures currently designated; other quality benchmarks will continue to be added. The new law has raised concern among physicians, legislators and policy makers who worry that bureaucrats don't have the expertise to set standards of care or that physician autonomy will be affected.

## Question and Answer

ASK MARK WAKAI

**Q: We're a small but growing practice that has always used a traditional answering service to handle after-hours calls from patients. Lately, however, our physicians report that they're being paged constantly, often for minor complaints or questions. How can we be sure that patients who really need medical advice receive it, while minimizing unnecessary intrusions into our time away from the office?**

**A: Sometimes it's hard for a layperson to know which symptoms warrant immediate action and which can wait until the next day. An answering service isn't staffed with people who are equipped to make medical decisions, so you're paged more frequently than situations might warrant.**

### INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO PROVIDE FREE ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTION TECHNOLOGY

Ever since the Institute of Medicine identified sloppy handwriting as the cause of thousands of preventable medication errors, patient safety advocates have lobbied for the use of electronic prescription software. The National ePrescribing Patient Safety Initiative (NEPSI) is providing physicians with a simple, secure system at no cost. The program is being sponsored by some of the largest technology companies in the world, including Dell, Microsoft and Intel. Interested physicians can visit the NEPSI website at [www.NationaleRx.com](http://www.NationaleRx.com) to learn more and register for the program.

#### Generic Drug Makers to Pay Fees

A budget proposal released by the Bush administration calls for makers of generic drugs to pay about \$16 million a year in fees to the Food and Drug Administration. The money "would enable the FDA to reduce review times and respond to the growing number of generic drug applications," the proposal said. Manufacturers of brand-name drugs and medical devices already pay such fees to the FDA to hasten review times. Congress will need to vote on the new proposal.

Many physicians have found that subscribing to RMHN Ask-A-Nurse™ program works well for them. Your patients' calls are taken by a staff of RMHN registered nurses who can answer general health and medical questions, make basic health assessments, and offer advice for common concerns—for instance, how to lower a child's fever. These trained RMHN clinicians can often relieve fears that would otherwise cause patients to page you unnecessarily or make unnecessary trips to the emergency room.

The feedback we receive from physicians using RMHN Ask-A-Nurse™ is overwhelmingly positive. Being paged less often after hours helps improve their quality of life. They also feel that patient satisfaction increases when people have access to reliable medical advice from a caring, qualified nurse.

RMHN's new Call Center offers many services to free up staff time and better serve both patients and providers.

Call Clay Fosjord at (406) 238-6066 for information.



### HELP DESK SOLVES IT PROBLEMS

#### OUR HELP DESK IS PREPARED TO ASSIST YOU WITH IDX ISSUES

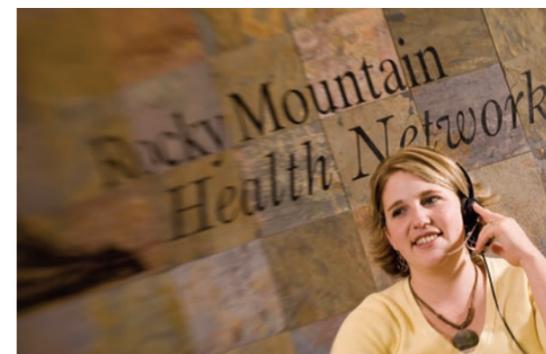
If you use IDX practice management software, you know what a robust system it is. You also know that it is complex. So when you run into problems, or have a question about a specific function of the software, where do you turn? Now, you can make RMHN's Help Desk your first call.

At RMHN, we have hired several new full-time employees who have been fully trained in all aspects of IDX. They manage caller requests with special help desk software that tracks each request. This means that when you call, a unique ticket number is assigned to your case. If it takes multiple calls to fully resolve your problem, all previous efforts to help have been documented and are available to the technician on call, so you don't have to start over each time.

Many commonly asked questions about IDX can be resolved quickly by our technicians. If your issue proves to be less straightforward, we have the resources to talk you through trouble-shooting methods until a fix is found. No one should hesitate to contact us with questions – wait times are minimal, and we can ultimately help you and your office staff become more confident and more efficient working with IDX.

Currently the Help Desk operates from 8 AM to 5 PM Mountain Time and can be reached at (406) 237-5815.

If you would like to set up an on-site IDX training for your office, let us send an expert to guide you. Call Loren Schrag at (406) 238-6066 to schedule a training event.



#### OTHER TIME-SAVING IT STRATEGIES

##### Document imaging services

If a fully operational EMR is beyond your grasp at the present time, you can still eliminate paper charts – both existing records and new ones. Our document imaging services are flexible, depending on what you need.

##### Electronic statement technology

Generating patient statements manually requires labor to print, fold, stuff and mail. As an alternative, electronically generated statements are delivered to you in a data file for mere pennies.

##### Hardware and software sales

Because of our consolidated buying power, RMHN can offer discounted prices on much of the IT hardware and software you'll use in your practice.

## HELP DESK

FEATURES

*at a glance*



- IDX practice management software is robust and complex.
- RMHN's Help Desk technicians are trained in all aspects of IDX.
- Most problems are resolved in just one call!
- Our technicians will walk you through the troubleshooting process.
- Your help request and response will be logged so that if more than one call is needed, you don't have to start from scratch.
- Help Desk hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mountain Time.
- Reach the Help Desk at (406) 237-5815.
- On-site IDX training is available for your office.

### RMHN'S NEW WEBSITE

# http://www designed with You in Mind

When RMHN redesigned our website, we did it with you in mind. Our site, www.rmhn.org, provides answers to real-life business questions. It features case studies on the types of situations our members face every day – and how to handle them – as well as a growing library of articles on subjects that matter to you, our members.

Below is a sneak peak of some of the features ▼

There have been many other changes underway here at RMHN – including a brand new design for our logo, brochures, newsletters. The updated look effectively communicates the growing company that we are.

## Rocky Mountain Health Network

Leading in Healthcare Business

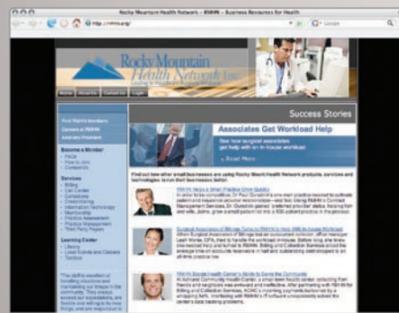


# www.rmhn.org



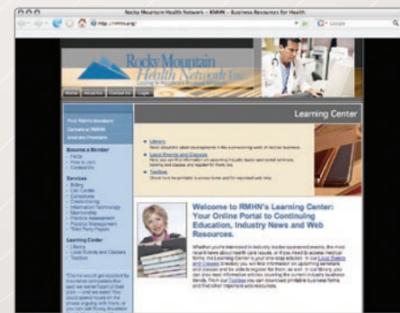
#### HOME PAGE ADVANTAGE.

Our new home page has a distinct “newsletter” look with crisp headlines and lots of information. The page features a user-friendly navigation bar that guides you to every one of the services that we offer. You'll also find today's national healthcare headlines that are updated throughout the day.



#### CELEBRATE SUCCESS.

One of our favorite parts of the site celebrates our clients' successes. From our homepage, click on “Read Success Stories” to learn how RMHN has helped clients become more efficient and effective. Success stories are what RMHN is all about.



#### LEARNING CENTER.

Click on this link and enter a virtual reading room where you can browse articles on trends in healthcare business. If you are searching locally for a seminar or course, click on “Local Events and Classes.” If it's an Internet resource or printable form that you need, click on the link to the “Toolbox” we've built for you. We've done our homework so that you can focus on your practice.



#### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.

RMHN members can explore the complete list of services we offer as well as read testimonials about how those services have helped improve the bottom line of other practices. RMHN employees can log into their own portal to stay on top of internal news; and healthcare consumers in the community can locate a physician by specialty or location.



#### PHOTO OPPORTUNITY.

Crisp photography lends a personalized touch to our site – you'll find pictures of our new building as well as the smiling faces of RMHN employees hard at work for you.

## MEMBER PROFILE

## BILLINGS GASTROINTESTINAL ASSOCIATES

## Practice overview

Billings Gastrointestinal Associates is a well-established specialty practice that works primarily on referrals. Currently, Dr. Stephen Baum and Dr. Nina Tomaszewski are the practice's principal physicians.

## The business challenge

Several years ago the office had fallen behind in billing and filing claims. It seemed likely that quite a bit of revenue was being lost. Also, the bookkeeping system needed updating to meet the needs of the practice.

## The solution

The practice outsourced to RMHN, gaining RMHN employee Rita Brown as a part-time practice manager. Rita has an MBA and is a certified public accountant, a certified compliance specialist, and a certified medical practice manager. She reviewed every bit of



Nina Tomaszewski, MD



Steven Baum, MD

paper in the practice's accounting office and revamped the bookkeeping system to vastly improve the financial operations of the practice.

## The benefits

New, efficient operational processes have been created. These changes weren't disruptive to the physicians in any way because there was no need to change practice management software. All aspects of billing are now handled electronically – charge entry is performed by an administrative assistant and RMHN sends out statements and follows up with payors. "We now have turnaround on accounts receivables that are better than MGMA benchmarks," says Rita.

## Incoming AND Outgoing

Better Billing and Collections Practices

By **Mary Holten**,  
Provider Accounts Receivable ManagerCOMMON COLLECTIONS ISSUES:  
WHEN PARENTS PASS THE BUCK

An all-too-common situation is trying to collect from the divorced parents of a child to whom you've rendered services – and each parent tells you, "Let my ex take care of that bill!"

The main thing to keep in mind is that a divorce decree shouldn't have any impact at all on the way you go about collecting a bill. Divorce is a civil dispute between two spouses; it is not a bankruptcy proceeding which wipes out a debt. Regardless of who has custody, medical services performed for minor children are legally seen as the financial responsibility of both parents, even if they are divorced.

An article in the magazine *Collecting in Healthcare* suggests the following rule of thumb: first request payment from the parent who signed for the medical service; if that parent truly seems unable to pay, then pursue the other parent. Make it clear that you're aware of your rights under the law to be reimbursed for services rendered.

HANDLING  
COLLECTIONS  
IN-HOUSE?

Make your business office more productive with IVR phone technology...

Interactive voice response (IVR) can free up your staff and make account information more accessible to patients. With just a touchtone phone, patients can make payments any time of the day or night, without having to talk to a staff member. The transactions are handled by RMHN software, so your costs are minimal.



## UPDATE FOR ANCILLARY PROVIDERS

Preparing for the Effects of  
Consumer-Driven Healthcare

Did you know that the American patient is poised to become the fastest growing payer in America over the next five years?

AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH NETWORK WE ARE ON THE LEADING EDGE OF HEALTH CARE BUSINESS TRENDS AND PRACTICES. OUR FOCUS IS ON HELPING OUR MEMBERS PREPARE FOR INDUSTRY CHANGES.



THIS MONTH ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH NETWORK'S FEATURED ARTICLE CENTERS IN ON HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS AND HOW THEY AFFECT CONSUMERS AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS.

While consumer-driven health plans are still a small part of the overall market, they are gaining momentum. These new models of health insurance are designed to contain costs by transferring more financial responsibility to the consumer, who benefits from the lower premiums associated with high-deductible plans. Proponents of the movement say that patients are less likely to undergo unnecessary treatments and tests when paying a greater portion of the bill from their own pockets. Critics worry that overly cost-conscious patients will skimp on necessary care, leading to more problems and greater costs down the line.

"Our main concern is for people to have healthcare coverage, and we try to stay out of the politics regarding the various competing approaches," said Mike Foster, Regional Director of Advocacy for St. Vincent Healthcare. "CDHP's and HSA's are relatively new ideas that have captured the attention of some groups, organizations, and policy makers. Like other health coverage concepts and programs, they have both appealing and worrisome aspects. It's important for healthcare providers to understand these subtleties and to keep them within the context of promoting healthcare coverage for the people of our communities, states, and nation."

The type of consumer-driven health plan (CDHP) getting the most attention is the health savings account (HSA), which was first introduced in 2003. An HSA is an account in which plan participants can save pre-tax dollars, withdrawing when necessary to pay for medical care until they've met their deductible, which can be as high as \$5,000 with some plans. Some consumers with HSAs will have debit cards that deduct funds directly from an HSA account, others may have checks, and still others may have to pay out of pocket and apply for reimbursement.

For both consumers and healthcare providers there is a huge advantage to the HSA: funds can be used to pay for services not usually covered by traditional or less comprehensive health plans. Over-the-counter drugs

can be purchased with HSA funds. Ancillary services like chiropractic care, physical therapy, counseling, acupuncture, vision care, and even naturopathic medicine can also be paid for from an HSA account.

## COLLECTING FROM HSA PATIENTS

If you're providing a service that isn't covered by your patient's health plan, collecting payment is much the same as it is with any self-pay patient. For services that are covered by a third-party payor, the process can be a little trickier. It can be difficult to know the patient's real-time deductible status, which is necessary to determine whether your payment will be coming from the insurer or from the patient's HSA.

It would seem that the easiest way to eliminate billing headaches with HSA patients would be to collect payment at the time of service.

But some payor contracts include language that specifically prohibits you from collecting anything other than co-pays at the point of service, requiring you to wait until the claim has been processed before you can bill the patient. One way to work within this constraint is to ask for the patient's HSA debit card or checking number, plus a signed agreement that authorizes you to deduct funds from his account as soon as the claim is processed.

Most patients will have a portion of their monthly wages automatically deposited into their HSAs. This means they'll start out with a low balance that may not be sufficient to cover your charges early on in the process. It may be to your benefit, in such cases, to bill in monthly installments while money accrues in the patient's HSA.

Keep in mind that CDHPs change not only the patients' financing options, but also their approach to healthcare costs. In the future, patients will want to know how much they're paying and for what exactly they're paying. As a result, they'll be more focused on both cost-effective options and on quality.

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of health insurance  
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MHA Spring Education Conference & Vendor Fair

March 28-30, 2007

(Vendor Fair takes place on Thursday, March 29, from 4:00 – 6:00 pm.)

Red Lion Colonial Hotel  
Helena, Montana

For information on keynote presentation and break-out sessions, visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.mtha.org/"](http://www.mtha.org/) [www.mtha.org](http://www.mtha.org).

To book hotel rooms, call the Colonial Hotel at (406) 443-2100.

### 6th Annual From the Heart Cardiovascular Conference

February 16-17, 2007

Mansfield Health Education Center  
Billings, Montana.

To register, please go to [HYPERLINK "http://www.nwrei.org"](http://www.nwrei.org) [www.nwrei.org](http://www.nwrei.org) or call the Northwest Research and Education Institute at 406- 237-5300

### Montana Society of Pathologists Annual Meeting

March 17, 2007

Big Sky, Montana.

For more information, call the Northwest Research and Education Institute at 406- 237-5300

## COMMUNITY TRAINING CENTER COURSES

### Heartsaver CPR – Boulder Room

02/16/07 8 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Healthcare Provider – Boulder Room

02/19/07 8 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Healthcare Provider Renewal – Boulder Room

02/21/07 7:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### CPR Saturday – Mansfield Health Education Center

02/24/07 All Day

*All classes are on the St. Vincent Healthcare campus.*



**Rocky Mountain**  
*Health Network Inc.*

Leading in Healthcare Business Solutions

P.O. Box 69, Billings, MT 59103-0069

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
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BILLINGS MT  
PERMIT 294

## MEMBER SERVICES

Billing Services

Self-Pay Account Collection

Collection Agency Services

Claims Clearinghouse Services

Compliance Resource

CPR Courses

Computer/IT Services

Document Imaging Services

E-Business Initiatives

Fitness Club Memberships

Group Purchase of Health Insurance

Medical Library

Outreach Travel

Practice Management Services

Practice Management Software

Recourse Loan Program

Telecommunication Services

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