



## DR. HEIDI FELL

### Calgary, Alberta

Dr. Fell opened her practice in March 1999. Exposed to EMR systems as a locum physician in the 1990s, today she uses Wolf extensively in her practice to improve the quality and efficiency of patient care. She also travels throughout Alberta as a Physician Resource with Alberta's Physician Office System Program. Dr. Fell is a passionate advocate of the importance of training to the success of an EMR implementation.

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Heidi Fell, MD

Dr. Heidi Fell, a family practitioner in Calgary, Alberta, had seen her share of electronic medical record (EMR) solutions before opening her own practice in March 1999. Dr. Fell, who had always been interested in computers, thought it was "fun" to try out different EMR systems when she worked as a locum, and was immediately impressed with the improved legibility of charts in some EMR systems. She noted that when she first experienced EMR systems, "it was so much better looking in an EMR for patient information than looking for a note written somewhere in a visit record from two years ago."

#### Primary Benefits of EMR to Family Practice

Dr. Fell identifies four primary benefits from EMR to her family practice, including easy and timely access to information such as lab and test results; the ability to renew multiple prescriptions for a single patient at the same time; and improved accuracy and completeness of the overall patient record.

"The main point of the EMR is to improve patient care. And Wolf has certainly helped us to achieve that." Dr. Fell particularly likes how Wolf graphs laboratory results and medications; she explained, "I find that this really helps motivate and educate patients about the impact of their medications on their conditions."

#### Using Automated Rules to Improve Patient Safety

The fourth benefit of EMR – and one of the most important – is the use of automated rules to trigger reminders and follow up activities in her practice. For example, Dr. Fell has used Wolf Practice Search to target patients who use at least four drugs which have been recalled in the past six years, including Serzone, Vioxx, the Ortho Evra patch, and Elidel and Protopic skin creams. "It was simple to search my patient database and quickly notify them of these drug recalls or warnings," explained Dr. Fell.

Dr. Fell has made extensive use of rules to automatically notify patients such as seniors who require routine vaccinations such as pneumococcal or flu shots; women who should undergo screening for mammograms or pap smears according to clinical best practice guidelines; and to remind her of targeted interventions for conditions that she does not routinely screen for such as aortic aneurysm screening for all male smokers over 65. She commented: "By using the advanced features of the EMR, physicians can become much more proactive, and stay on top of your patient base."

Dr. Fell shared a telling anecdote of how her use of the Wolf EMR system saved the life of one of her patients. "In the first week that I implemented the mammogram reminder I saw a patient in her early 50s who hadn't had a mammogram in just over two years and had come in for another reason. She was sent for a mammogram based on a Wolf reminder. Unfortunately, her tests came back positive for breast cancer in both breasts; however, because we caught it so early and so quickly her prognosis is very good. That reminder very likely saved her life."





#### 4 Tips to Succeed with EMR

1. Improve your typing skills.
2. Manage expectations. EMR fluency doesn't happen overnight.
3. Continue to learn. Take advantage of additional training if you can.
4. Take advantage of change management services to get the most from your EMR investment.

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#### Chronic Disease Management

Dr. Fell also uses Wolf Chronic Disease Management together with Wolf Practice Search and the Rules Generator to ensure all her diabetes patients, for example, are up to date with their lab monitoring and are meeting the latest clinical practice guidelines. "I can check at a glance to ensure they have had an A1c in the last three months and that their LDL is less than 2.0. When the guideline changed from an LDL of 2.5 or less to 2.0 or less, I was able to generate a reminder for all of my diabetic patients who weren't meeting this new goal."

Does she use it from home? She laughs: "I try not to. However, I know that if I'll be out of the office a lot or if I'm waiting for specific lab results, I'll certainly log in to my Wolf system when I'm away from the office."

#### Succeeding with EMR

Dr. Fell, as a long-time Wolf EMR user, also travels throughout Alberta as a Physician Resource with Alberta's Physician Office System Program. A power EMR user herself, she is a passionate advocate of the importance of training to the success of an EMR implementation.

Dr. Fell offers the following advice to physicians who are considering an EMR system or who want to improve their productivity with their current system:

1. Improve your typing skills! Take the time to become comfortable with the computer and other hardware such as scanners to get ready for a successful EMR implementation.
2. Manage expectations in your clinic. The first six months present a steep learning curve for many doctors; EMR fluency doesn't happen overnight.
3. Keep learning. Once you have achieved basic fluency with the EMR system, it's time to take additional training to learn about more sophisticated EMR features, such as how to use rules or practice search capabilities to understand practice demographics and proactively reach out to patients.
4. If you are receiving provincial funding for your EMR, take advantage of additional change management services that are available to your clinic. For example, POSP in Alberta has a Change Management Services program that can help make the transition to EMR smoother; physicians can request a visit from a Change Management Advisor – one is assigned to each clinic – who can help your clinic get the most from its EMR investment. In Ontario, the Transition Support Program (TSP) provides access to Practice Management Consultants (PMCs) who travel to physician offices to help them with the funding paperwork and making the transition to the EMR system.

