Simple Label Makers Sub for Electronic Records

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If you're not ready to invest thousands of dollars in an electronic medical records system, a desktop label writer may be just what the doctor ordered.

"This is a very cost-effective alternative for anyone who doesn't have an EMR system," said Dr. Stephanie Lucas, who equipped her two-physician Detroit practice with several Dymo Twin Turbo label makers at a cost of about $150 apiece.

"I have all my prescriptions on the attached software, so all I have to do to print a label is go to the list on my computer, click on the prescription, and it comes out of the machine," said Dr. Lucas, who puts one label into the patient's chart and gives a second, signed, copy to the patient to take to the pharmacy. "Or I stick the label or labels on a sheet of paper and fax it to the pharmacy."

The internist and endocrinologist take an extra step to ensure that patients know what their medications are for. For example, in addition to printing "Statin 20 mg #90," the label also says "cholesterol med."

"Patients love it, and pharmacists appreciate being able to read the prescriptions without ever having to call and ask me what I wrote," said Dr. Lucas.

The desktop labeling system also integrates with software programs to produce individual labels. "It's nice because it has an optional mailing bar code to facilitate mailing," she added. The label maker also prints individual postage stamps using the Web site www.stamps.com.

"In addition, the data management software that comes with the machine contains our entire Rolodex file of physicians, so that patients referred to another facility get a legible copy of the name, address, and phone number on a printed label that can be affixed to the lab sheets or tickler file."

Pharmacists appreciate not having to call and ask me what I wrote for a prescription.

DR. LUCAS

Dr. Lucas also prints legible, customized instructions for each patient, and puts a second copy into each chart. ■

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