

# Smith Senior Living switches to Electronic Medical Records

Smith Senior Living, sponsor of Smith Crossing in Orland Park, Ill. and Smith Village in Chicago's Beverly neighborhood, has been at the vanguard of caring for residents for more than eight decades. Most recently, it is a leader among retirement communities as it converts to using electronic medical records, also known as EMR.

In 2006, the federal government challenged all healthcare organizations to switch from paper records to computer files by 2014. And in 2007, Smith Senior Living was among the first retirement communities to launch a plan to revolutionize the way it manages residents' healthcare records.

"Our EMR system improves service to our residents by managing information about their well-being and medical needs even more efficiently and accurately," says Michael A. Flynn, chief executive officer at Smith Senior Living. "EMR ultimately frees our nurses and nurses' aides to spend more time with our residents, providing the level of personal care that is a hallmark of our communities."

As a trailblazer among senior living communities, Smith communities are integrating EMR into their residents' healthcare management. Craig Hanenburg, chief information officer for Smith Senior Living, and

Jill Smazik, RN, electronic medical records coordinator and clinical trainer, are often asked to present at national and regional conferences. They share Smith's model for technical implementation and staff training in order to help other retirement communities that are exploring ways to embrace EMR practices.

"We're only in year two of a five-year process, and our new EMR system already improves service to our skilled nursing care and assisted living residents," says Hanenburg. "By entering information as care is given, we can see patterns and trends almost as they occur. EMR reports enhance our ability to identify special needs and situations much earlier.

"Electronic medical records also are important because they increase accuracy and efficiency. They will become even more valuable as the healthcare community adapts to using EMR," says Hanenburg.

"In 2014, when most hospitals are fully electronic, the medical records of residents in Smith communities who require medical care can be sent in an instant to their hospital and physicians, helping them to make fully informed decisions much more quickly," Hanenburg adds.

By the end of 2009, Smith's EMR software system will automatically alert the staff to the possibilities of dangerous drug interactions; flag atypical medication dosages; and confirm that the drugs are being administered on the correct schedule.

Currently, nurses at Smith Village and Smith Crossing use the HealthMEDX system to

document electronically all of their daily notes for residents in skilled nursing care, assisted living and Alzheimer's/Memory Support areas. Nurses' aides use touch screens to document assistance with residents' activities of daily living, as well as to record vital signs including blood pressure, temperature, weight and other critical data. Additionally at Smith Crossing, charting by social service, occupational therapy, physical therapy, dietary and wound care specialists are included in a resident's electronic file. At Smith Village, staff members in these areas are in training for electronic charting.

"The end result of electronic medical records is a more efficient, accurate, documentation system," says Mary Ann Doyle, director of nursing at Smith Crossing, which has been working in the EMR system for a year and a half. "Although it took time for training, using EMR is now second nature to our team."

"Smith Senior Living has invested hundreds of hours of staff time in planning and training for the transition to EMR," says coordinator/trainer Smazik. "We want everyone on the team to be completely comfortable with the new system so that residents see the benefits immediately. We are gratified by how the healthcare and social services teams are embracing this new system."

For more information about how Smith Senior Living can help seniors enjoy their retirement, call Smith Crossing in Orland Park, at 708-326-2300 or visit [smithcrossing.org](http://smithcrossing.org). For Smith Village in Chicago's Beverly neighborhood, call 773-474-7300 or visit [smithvillage.org](http://smithvillage.org).