

# 'Holy grail' tech aids ER docs

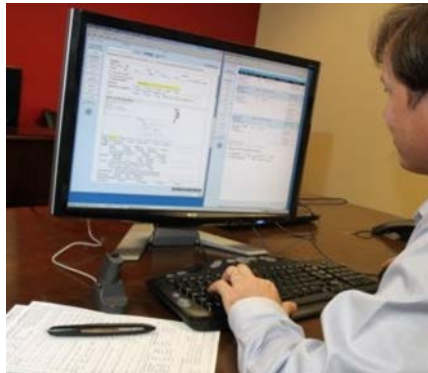
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Caption: KEEPING TRACK: Dr. Michael Roshon demonstrates the FlexChart setup at Forerun in Waltham.

Emergency room doctors get interrupted an average of every 20 seconds, so Waltham-based Forerun Inc. hopes its new electronic charting software system will save them time and increase their productivity.

Designed by ER clinicians at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Forerun's FlexChart is designed to be fast, efficient and easily deployed while satisfying clinical, billing and regulatory needs.

"This is the holy grail of emergency medicine that we're trying to solve -- the right balance of speed and quality in how emergency physicians document their patients' experiences in the emergency room," Forerun CEO Ken Wolfe said.

With FlexChart, doctors on bedside rounds can use a digital pen to record data by checking boxes and writing on a patient complaint form. When the pen is later docked at a computer, the data uploads to FlexChart. Doctors can edit the online chart and add more information -- even orally, as the system uses Dragon speech-recognition software made by Burlington's Nuance Communications.

FlexChart then converts the form to a text report that can be forwarded to a patient's primary care physician. Doctors also can skip the pen and enter patient data straight into a computer or an iPad.

Many hospitals that once relied on paper forms have moved to other electronic systems that are too time-consuming, Wolfe said. "Physicians found themselves working another one to two hours at the end of a shift to document patients, and that caused a lot of department inefficiencies," he said.

The 5-year-old Forerun hopes to grab a 10 percent share of an estimated \$500 million U.S. market. FlexChart is being deployed at seven hospitals, including Milton Hospital. Ohio's Emergency Medicine

Physicians, whose 600 emergency doctors staff 60 hospitals, started using FlexChart with the digital pens a month ago at Summa Barberton Hospital.

"We've had several electronic medical-record systems implemented in hospitals that we work at, and we've seen some negative impact on physician productivity and patient length of stay," said Dr. Christopher Corbit, chief medical informatics officer.

Summa physicians have experienced some minor errors with FlexChart's handwriting transcription -- and the digital pen is on the large side for fitting in a pocket -- but Corbit so far is pleased. "It's much easier with a piece of paper and pen, and much more efficient," he said.



The firm is led by Ken Wolfe.; STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX, ABOVE