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### Eye care center seeing files better Computerizing speeds access and saves space

*RUTH BAUM BIGUS*

Company: Durrie Vision is an eye care center offering Lasik, cataract and other surgeries. Durrie also is a research center investigating the latest techniques and treatments for treating eye problems.

Telephone: (913) 491-3737

Address: 5520 College Blvd., Overland Park, KS

Web site: [www.durrievision.com](http://www.durrievision.com)

Employees: 25 (including two physicians)

Ownership/top management: Daniel Durrie owns the center. The management team includes Tammy Crane, clinic director; Jean Kraushaar, administrator; Bonnie Heck, surgery director; and Chris Balestrieri, information technology manager.

Challenge: How to manage patient information more efficiently.

Background: Durrie Vision has about 8,000 patients, with about 50 visiting the clinic every day. Each patient has a file containing pertinent medical records. Some patients have small files while others have big files containing documents from various treatments and procedures. Because of the volume of files and the information contained in them, they were stored separately in large file racks.

"We ran out of space so we store them off site and we have to retrieve them as needed, and when we retrieve them it costs time and money," said Balestrieri.

Durrie Vision's management wanted quicker access to records for both the staff and patients.

Action steps: Before Balestrieri joined Durrie Vision in summer 2003, she worked for a company that sold practice management software. These programs put medical records, business information and office management functions into an electronic database easily accessible on computer.

The staff looked at two packages for electronic medical records.

Durrie went with **Medinformatix**, produced by a California company.

With input from the center's doctors, the system was customized into a user-friendly format.

To run the new program, Durrie Vision purchased 20 computers for its examination rooms and surgical suites - places the center had never had computers before.

Installation, with the help of an outside consultant, took place over two months in early 2004.

Balestrieri and other managers designed a training program for the staff that included two four-hour sessions. Training was done by department; appointments made in the old system were transferred to the new system as a part of the training process.

In March 2004, Durrie went "live" with the practice management portion of the software, which included scheduling, billing and patient demographics. In April, the electronic patient records went live. As patients came in to the new system, past records were scanned to update everything.

"Now we're scanning the remainder of the charts (and) eventually everything (paper) will be destroyed," Balestrieri said.

Now information is put in during a patient's visit. A doctor is assigned a "scribe," a technician who records during the patient visit. The doctors also can access other digitized documents.

Staff members can access Eyemaginations, an animated patient education system, on the spot to help explain surgical procedures and other treatments.

The system is password protected and access is limited. The system is backed up on tape and

on a drive two times a day.

Results: Balestrieri said the entire project cost \$250,000, but the expense has been worth it. The office is running more efficiently and that benefits both patients and staff.

"Anything that the patient needs now we do it in an instant," Balestrieri said. "It allows us to take better care of the patient. When they move from the exam room to surgery, the doctors have information immediately."

The medical staff is especially pleased with the new system.

"I have everything at my fingertips," Durrie said. "We're able to give even better patient care because everything is there."

Balestrieri said the center has even saved money.

"We've downsized quite a bit," she said. "We no longer have a medical records staff and we've reduced our billing staff."

Those reductions have amounted to savings of about \$150,000," she said.

Got a solution?

Has your business found an innovative solution for a management issue? Send e-mail to Ruth Baum Bigus at [ruthwrite@everestkc.net](mailto:ruthwrite@everestkc.net) or send a fax to The Star at (816) 234-4346

Photo

FRED BLOCHER/The Kansas City Star

Daniel Durrie, a physician and owner of Durrie Vision in Overland Park, uses a computer when discussing treatment with patients. The system helps explain surgical procedures and other options to patients.