

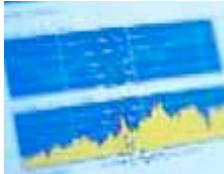


Reporting the Internet's Impact
on Health Care

CALIFORNIA HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Google Enters Partnership To Support Free EHRs

March 16, 2007



Practice Fusion, a San Francisco startup, plans to announce on Friday a deal with Google to offer a free Web-based electronic health record system to physicians and medical groups, the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) reports.

EHR systems typically cost physicians at least \$20,000 to install, but Practice Fusion, which also offers practice management tools, is able to offer the service for free by partnering with Google's AdSense network. When a physician uses the EHR system, AdSense will recognize certain keywords and will display ads related to that condition.

The keywords are limited to a patient's condition, diagnosis or treatment, and advertising is intended to be discreet, according to the *Chronicle*. Ryan Howard, CEO of Practice Fusion, added that the company will comply with federal privacy laws and protect patient data.

Google officials said they will not have access to patient data. Howard added that Google will be able to determine how many ads were viewed but will not be able to link that data to specific patients or physicians. Advertisers will receive basic demographic data about the physicians viewing the ads, such as their location and specialty, but will not be given names, the *Chronicle* reports.

Despite the privacy protections in place, some privacy advocates are worried about combining patient information with an Internet search engine supported by advertisements.

Allison Knight, staff attorney for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said, "It still comes down to the fact the company is using people's sensitive, personal information for profit."

The main advertising customers are expected to be pharmaceutical companies, but Howard said insurers and other health-related companies also could find the model appealing. Physicians will have the option of paying \$250 per month to use the EHR system without ads.

Physicians Integrated Medical Group, an association of about 500 independent physicians in San Francisco and San Mateo counties in California, is the first medical group to sign up for the new service. The group within the next month or 45 days will let physicians manage billing electronically and later will allow physicians to use the system to manage patients' health records (Colliver, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/16).

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