

alized healthcare providers to access and update patient files using wireless pen-based personal computers. In addition, authorized healthcare providers can access a record while other healthcare providers use the same record. By providing simultaneous access to patient data, the present invention enables real-time collaboration among multiple healthcare providers.

The availability of electronic data permits instant, sophisticated analysis of a patient's clinical data. Thus, the EMR system can create graphs of a patient's vital signs and lab results or the system can provide an analyze patient information to identify medication interactions and allergies. Using the present invention, a healthcare provider can likewise select, sort, and analyze patient data to identify relationships among the data considered. In addition, the EMR system provides flexibility in the creation and maintenance of patient data repositories. Thus, the present invention can support a large healthcare enterprise distributed across a large geography as well as a single physician office. Moreover, the present invention ensures patient confidentiality through the use of a tiered password system. The EMR system provides several levels of security for access to patient data. For example, a system administrator may have global password access to any patient data for system maintenance and debug purposes, whereas physicians may have access only to patient records within their specialty and nurses and staff may have access to only those patient records within their immediate care. In addition, a patient may request restricted access to their data by only certain personnel. Thus, in contrast to physical records, the EMR system provides superior protection of patient data.

In addition, the present invention is useful in legal, manufacturing and general administration environments. For example, the present invention is capable of organizing, maintaining and protecting legal files in an attorney's office. Thus, the EMR system can store and retrieve scanned images of paper documents, such as deeds and assignments, as well as other native file formats, such as word processing files. The EMR system organizes and retrieves this data in a manner akin to that of a patient's medical record. Upon entry of a client data into the EMR system, attorneys can annotate documents, transfer information to and from other systems, or create new data for automatic filing in the client or case file. Similarly, the EMR system is useful for management of procurement or regulatory data in a manufacturing context. Thus, the EMR system can organize and maintain material safety data sheets (MSDS) as well as other data pertinent to materials procurement, such as conformance to specification measurements and inspection data for received lots, in a manufacturing environment. Lastly, the EMR system is useful for general administrative files in any organization. For example, the present invention is applicable to employee files in human resources, customer files in sales and approved suppliers in procurement. The EMR system can organize and retrieve data within these files in the manner as patient data in a patient data record. As discussed above, upon entry of a data into the EMR system, users can annotate documents, transfer information to and from other systems, or create new data for automatic filing in the respective file.

Those skilled in the art may practice the principles of the present invention in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. Accordingly, the disclosed embodiments of the invention are merely illustrative and do not serve to limit the scope of the invention set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A medical records system, comprising:
 - a point of care system to capture patient data at a point of care wherein the point of care system comprises:
 - patient data capture to enter information provided by a patient,
 - a clinical data capture, in data communication with the patient data capture to enter clinical data for the patient,
 - an encounter data capture, in data communication with the patient data capture, to enter diagnoses and procedures administered to the patient, and
 - progress notes, in data communication with the patient data capture, the clinical data capture and the encounter data capture, to enter information related to changes in the patient's condition, and
 - a patient data repository, in communication with the point of care system and with external systems, to store and organize the patient data for access by the point of care system.
 2. The medical records system of claim 1, further comprising a medication data capture, in data communication with the patient data capture and the progress notes, to enter medication information for the patient.
 3. The medical records system of claim 1, further comprising a practice guideline for reference to accepted medical practices, wherein the practice guideline communicates with the patient data capture, the clinical data capture, the progress notes and the encounter data capture.
 4. The medical records system of claim 3, further comprising a medication data capture, in data communication with the patient data capture, the progress notes and the practice guideline, to enter medication information for the patient.
 5. A medical records system, comprising:
 - a point of care system to capture patient data at a point of care; and
 - a patient data repository, in communication with the point of care system and with external systems, to store and organize the patient data for access by the point of care system, wherein the patient data repository comprises a server computer having access to patient data stored in a relational database that accepts SQL data queries.
 6. A medical records system, comprising:
 - a point of care system to capture patient data at a point of care; and
 - a patient data repository, in communication with the point of care system and with external systems, to store and organize the patient data for access by the point of care system, wherein the patient data repository comprises a server computer having access to patient data stored in a relational database that is ODBC compatible.
 7. A medical records system, comprising:
 - a point of care system to capture patient data at a point of care; and
 - a patient data repository, in communication with the point of care system and with external systems, to store and organize the patient data for access by the point of care system, wherein the patient data repository comprises:
 - a patient locator having a patient identifier,
 - a data manager, in communication with the patient locator, to organize patient data for storage and retrieval using the patient identifier, and
 - a data interface, in communication with the data manager, to transmit patient data to external systems and to receive patient data from the external systems.