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Web Alert

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eNATAL

This enterprising company provides a fully electronic antenatal record over the Internet following an application service provider model. Using a desktop PC with an Internet connection in the office, an obstetrician can record all of the information currently kept in a paper chart to an electronic form saved on the company's server computer. This is then accessible around the clock, using any other computer with an Internet connection, such as in the doctor's home or at the hospital. This review is not meant to be an endorsement, as there are many concerns regarding integration into current clinical practice, efficiency, and productivity of data entry, as well as clinical information privacy and security, which are raised by this enterprise. Nonetheless, this is one of the first commercial offerings to obstetricians of a fully interactive electronic medical record, a goal that many large hospitals and medical universities have been working toward for years. Those institutions (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG] among them) have been aiming toward a universal electronic medical record, sharable by all clinicians, and integrated with other hospital or health system computers. However, this particular approach is aimed at private practitioners, is only usable for antepartum care, and does not integrate with one's other office computers, much less the hospital's. Nonetheless, it is at least a very compelling technology demonstration, and a look at where medical record technology is going.

Update: This web site is larger and filled with more information, perspectives, and endorsements than when first reviewed in this column. It is, nonetheless, still a corporate web site trying to sell a product. That product appears to be passing the test of time, as physicians and hospitals are adopting this web-based approach to electronic medical records. A poster presentation is planned for the annual clinical meeting of ACOG. Security is established and tested, and, if used carefully, this is one good answer to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. Access is immediate and always available via the Internet, although broadband (DSL, cable) is more practical for regular use than a dial-up connection. This is, perhaps, an ideal example of the original promise of computing and networking for medical information, and I join many others in predicting that Internet technology will be the preferred platform for record keeping and data transfer.

Site last updated: Not noted; copyright 20002003.

Access requirements: None; this is a company homepage; charges for services are listed.