

St. Andrews progressing with electronic records

By KATINA TENGESDAL

Staff Writer

ktengesdal@minotdailynews.com

St. Andrews Health Center in Bottineau, a member of the Northwest Alliance for Information Technology, has continued to make progress on its electronic medical records system. Many NWAIT member hospitals are hurrying to meet meaningful use deadlines that will ensure they receive incentive payments from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

"We are hoping to meet meaningful use deadlines by the first of July this year, so we can capture incentive payments. We have been putting a lot of time and effort into it, and we are midway through our build," said Jeff Ofstedal, technology director for St. Andrews Health Center.

St. Andrews currently uses electronic medical records for lab and order entry. The clinical documentation aspect of the record went live in February.

"The last big part we'll add will be physician practice documentation, and with that comes e-prescribing," Ofstedal said.

Ofstedal said the record implementation hasn't been without its challenges, mainly scheduling training sessions for busy staff members.

"The staff is already focused on patient care, then to schedule training to bring them up to par with technology on top of that has been a big challenge," Ofstedal said.

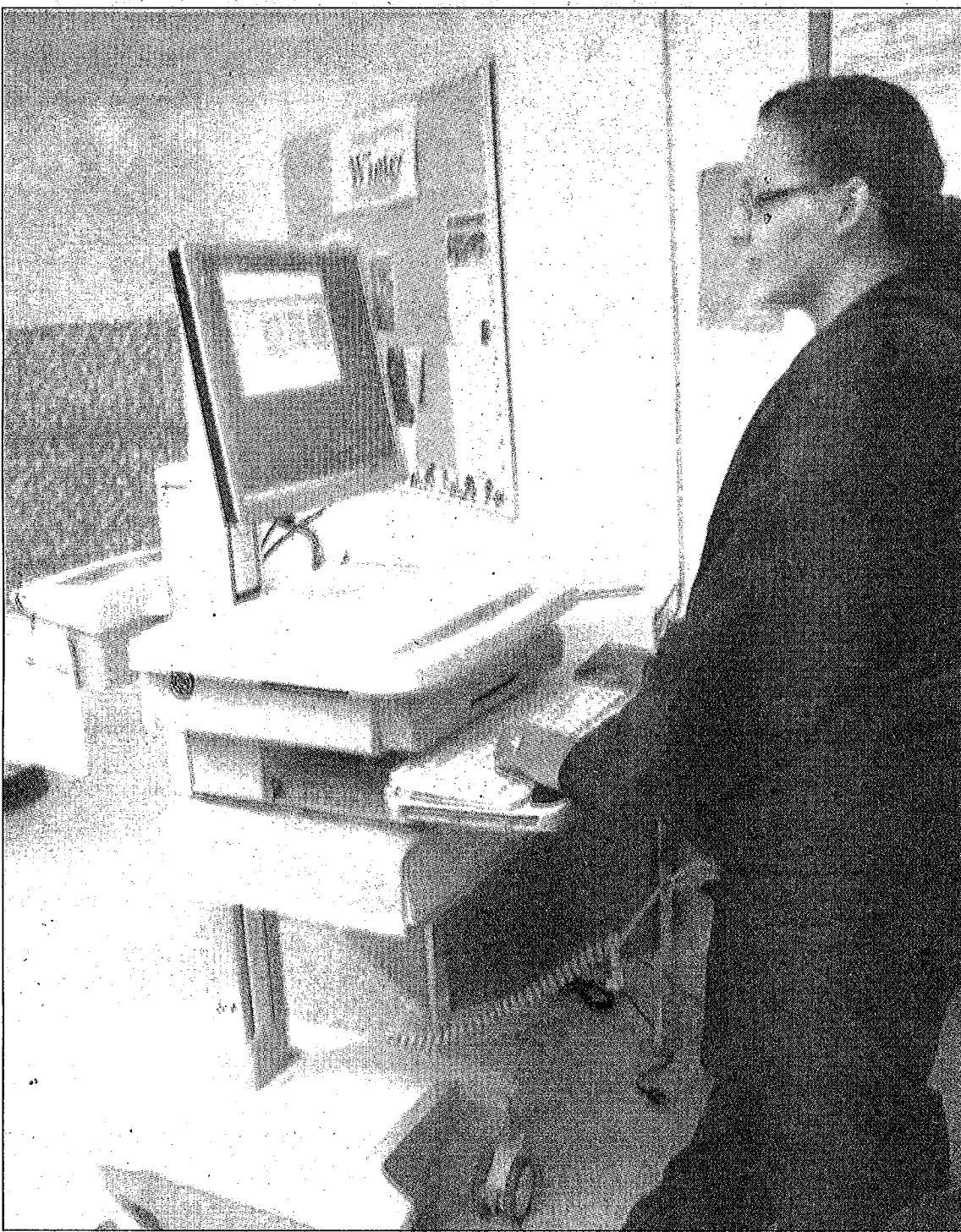
Some staff members have taken the lead to help their departments implement electronic medical records. Joan Mortensen, clinic manager, Jennifer Lauckner, RN, and Jade Trottier, RN, are some staff members who have dedicated large amounts of time to help move the process along.

"They're the super-users. They get trained, and then train the others. These people have really taken some time," Ofstedal said.

Being a part of the Northwest Alliance for Information Technology has also helped.

"The alliance began before meaningful use was even a buzzword. It was for the purpose of combining resources financially and technologically to better serve these communities. If each individual hospital was to undertake this, the hardware costs alone would be tremendous," Ofstedal said.

"As a group, we can leverage hardware costs, as well as vendor costs, and get better pricing. There's not only the cost savings,



Jade Trottier, RN, works with a Computer on Wheels at St. Andrews Health Center.

Submitted photo

there is the sharing of technical knowledge," he added.

With the move toward meaningful use guidelines, Ofstedal explained, the system is continuously evolving.

"We have fixes weekly and major updates

quarterly. It's a dynamic process. In the vendor's newest release, which we are loading on April 13, it will include all of the necessary upgrades to achieve their portion of allowing clients and hospitals to meet Stage 1 of meaningful use," Ofstedal said.



**Our drivers
are proven**