

# BUSINESS NEWS

## NEW JERSEY

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### NEW JERSEY'S FINEST

## A Cure for What Ails Doctors

**E**very entrepreneur wants to find the just-right business for the times. Yahoo! is one of those. As is eBay, the wildly successful on-line auction house. So, apparently, is Millennium Practice Management Associates.

Yes, it lacks the dot-com cachet, but Ramsey's Millennium is a privately held physician practice management company. Yahoo! and eBay help people navigate and shop on the information highway, Millennium helps groups of doctors survive the bumper car ride that health care has become. According to president Gregg Stolzberg, it takes over for its clients "all the services that are not medical."

These days, those services, especially billing and collections, and handling contracts with managed care organizations, have become so difficult and require such specialized skills, that some physicians have ended up selling out rather than face them any longer.

Millennium started out in 1996, "in the back of a physician's office with four people and myself," Stolzberg says. Since then it has grown to 30 employees working for 110 doctors and three hospitals. Millennium was started up with Stolzberg's capital and has managed to grow without outside investment. He declines to give revenue and income figures, but claims the company has "doubled in size every year," and currently processes "\$30 million worth of physician reimbursements a year."

Richard Puzo, a CPA in charge of the medical division at accounting firm J.H. Cohn in Roseland, says, "The company seems to be growing at a rapid pace. It has established a name for itself in the billing business as well in the consulting business."

Puzo has referred clients to Stolzberg's care whose billing and collections departments were struggling to keep up with today's demands. Says Puzo: "Millennium came in and has improved the conditions dramatically."

Millennium uses sophisticated practice

management software and maintains a high-speed computer connection to its clients' networks. Patient billing and insurance forms come into Millennium's office, a well lit, airy warren of cubicles, either by computer or delivery service. There, data is entered and forms are coded as necessary to make them acceptable to insurers. Any work done by Millennium is immediately reflected on the computers in clients' offices as well.

Maryclare Lewis, office manager for Cardiology Associates, a West Paterson practice, says, "We send over referral and insurance forms. We input billing stuff ourselves and they generate the bills."

Lewis also describes one of Millennium's primary advantages over the do-it-yourself ethic: "The relationship the billing company has with the insurance companies is very important, in terms of negotiating contracts and getting faster or better payments."

That is one of Millennium's strengths. Its top managers—who are the principal owners—have many years of experience running health care operations and playing both sides of the managed care game. Stolzberg, was one of this year's BUSINESS NEWS 40 Under 40 winners [March 8, 1999]. An avid scuba diver, he used to swim with the sharks at Aetna Health Plan. He says, "It's imperative in this hostile managed care environment to recoup all the dollars to which a practice is entitled."

Other members of the executive team are Joy Schare, vice president of operations, a registered nurse with a history in health care management work.

This intimate understanding of the way the system operates and where money gets bottlenecked pays off for Millennium clients. Stolzberg cites an example of the difference his firm's approach can make: "We worked with an OB/GYN practice that did 550 deliveries a year. After doing an audit of all the deliveries



Gregg Stolzberg and company will take over everything but the medical care.

and surgery the doctors had done, we found about 50 deliveries that weren't billed for and countless surgeries that slipped through the cracks."

The group meets weekly with client doctors to check for any problems in their offices. A Medicare representative visits Millennium weekly, according to Lewis of Cardiology Associates, to review billings with the staff. "An office like ours," says Lewis, "couldn't ask Medicare to do that."

Lewis says her office has found that medicine these days requires "very specialized attention to billing." Puzo says the job of billing and collecting in the managed care era is "becoming more complex" and an increasing number of medical practices are "having a problem getting competent people in that area."

Unlike some of the bigger practice management groups, Millennium does not buy physicians' practices. Rather, it takes the point of view that "most doctors still like medicine," according to Stolzberg. Says he: "If you can make [running a practice] easier and more efficient, that's a value to them." ■