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KLAS midyear awards announced

Familiar names once again dominated the roster of the top 20 rankings of the KLAS midyear report, which is based on customer evaluation of healthcare information technology products. Chesterfield, Mo.-based Unibased Systems Architecture's Resource Management System enterprise-scheduling product finished on top just like it did in last year's mid-year [report](#).

Orem, Utah-based KLAS Enterprises surveys healthcare executives, managers and clinicians from some 4,500 hospitals and 2,500 clinics who rate more than 750 products from more than 200 vendors. The results are valued because they are based on the opinions of product users who are asked basic questions such as would you buy it again? Did vendors keep their promises? Did the products work as promoted? And would you recommend the product to your friends and peers?

The product that knocked Unibased out of the top spot of the end-of-the-year [report](#) for 2006 DR Systems' Dominator PACS (picture-archiving and communications systems) finished fourth. (It finished third in last year's midyear rankings.) In between Unibased and DR Systems were as usual two products from Verona, Wis.-based Epic Systems Corp.

In all, Epic had four products in the top 10 shuffling positions. Its ambulatory billing and scheduling solution was the second-highest-ranked product, moving up from fourth-place last year. Its enterprise scheduling product moved up to third place from its previous fifth-place showing. While the EpicCare Inpatient clinical data repository, charting and orders system moved up to sixth place from seventh; and its EpicCare ambulatory electronic medical record fell to seventh place from second.

In addition to its overall product rankings, KLAS also tracks performance perception in more than 70 categories. While most of the category leaders remained the same, there were eight changes at the top of these list with much of the upward movement provided by well-known companies such as Allscripts Healthcare Solutions, AthenaHealth, General Electric Co. and McKesson Corp. One of the smaller companies in this elite group is MedComSoft, an Atlanta-based vendor that wrestled the top spot in the ambulatory EMR for the one-to-five-physician practices category away from eClinicalWorks of Westborough, Mass.

Hoovers.com reported that MedcomSoft had just 40 employees in 2005. Paul Davis, the company's chief operating officer, would not say how many there are now, only that the company continues to grow just as it moves up the KLAS rankings in the small-practice category.

Davis said the company finished seventh in its category for the 2006 midyear report, fourth in the 2006 year-end report, and now first in the latest evaluation.

"For us, it's an important milestone," Davis said, explaining that he thinks it's a reflection of the customer service his company provides in the form of on-site training geared toward full use of all EMR applications as soon as possible.

According to the report, 96% of its users would buy the MedcomSoft Record EMR again, and 96% said they would recommend it to a friend or peer.

"It's a tough market, obviously, but the way you work in this market is having doctors selling to doctors by word of mouth," Davis said, adding that MedcomSoft also has to overcome a poor perception many small practices have of EMRs

because of prior bad experiences with technology that did not fit their workflow. Being among the first vendors to have an ambulatory EMR certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology also helped the company get attention.

"We were in the first wave in 2006, and it was very important from a marketing standpoint," Davis said. "Now, it's a minimum standard but it's a critical minimum stamp of approval that you need to be successful in this market."

The small-practice market is seen as key to the nation's overall adoption of healthcare IT as small physician offices are the location where the overwhelming majority of healthcare services are delivered. But according to a 2005 study of 3,300 medical group practices by the Medical Group Management Association Center for Research, only 12.5% of practices with one to five physicians were using EMRs.

Davis said adoption is increasing as younger physicians replace older ones, but he added that older physicians are also coming to appreciate using EMRs.

"Clearly, younger doctors are leading this march to adoption," Davis said. "But, we have had several older physicians including some close to retirement who, after buying our product, have delayed their retirement."

Some larger companies have sought to enter the small-practice niche by buying the smaller vendors who were serving these clients. Davis wouldn't say if MedcomSoft has received any offers to sell but, ultimately, it wouldn't matter.

"Even if we have had offers, I wouldn't say, but one thing I say over and over again is that we're not for sale," he said. "I don't worry about what (larger companies) do, because the big guys aren't making much of an inroad in this market."

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