How would you describe the services SMR provides?
A: SMR specializes in supporting and protecting health care providers by ensuring highly accurate, secure and compliant release of medical records to third-party requesters.

What challenges do physicians and medical practices face in releasing medical records?
A: The world of release of information (ROI) is generally perceived by health information management (HIM) as a workflow inefficiency and, particularly, not a profit center for a medical practice. Additionally, the litigious nature of the medical world today has prompted an evolution within HIM departments. Introducing best practices in patient privacy and release accountability has become essential.

Maintaining the simple “copy and release” mentality of the days of old has become a risky way to release a patient’s protected health information (PHI). With the advent of HIPAA and the HITECH Act, along with the shift from a paper world to an electronic world, HIM departments are changing the way PHI is handled. To sum it up, physicians and medical practices need to be mindful of, and need to safeguard, the records that go out their front door. The days of logging and accounting for PHI disclosure and release via an Excel spreadsheet are fading away.

How do SMR’s core business solutions help physicians and their medical practices with releasing medical records?
A: Our goals are twofold. First, SMR turns ROI into a profit center for physicians and their practices. Second, SMR serves as a protector of the records being released. Although technology plays a huge role in advancing best practices for ROI, the human component involved in releasing medical records is so very important. Here is an example: An attorney requests a 100-page medical record from a medical practice. Before release of records, the request needs to be reviewed. The release authorization needs to be read to confirm compliance. And then, each page of the record must be quality-checked with a human eye. These vital steps — to name a few — are not managed by technology alone. They require diligent attention to detail by a human eye. This attention confirms quality. There is simply no substitute for it. This is SMR’s commitment.

Explain two or three common mistakes medical practices make in regard to their business discipline — mistakes SMR would prevent.
A: A few things come to mind. The first mistake is that I often see medical groups take a reflexive “fly-by-night” approach to releasing PHI. The second is for a group to think an electronic health record (EHR) system solves ROI workflow. The third error is to partner with an ROI vendor that cannot provide the vital attention to detail required by the human eye.

Regarding the issues cited above, what advice would SMR offer medical groups to empower them?
A: First, I would recommend HIM management take a proactive approach in protecting their physicians and organizations by consulting with a group of ROI experts. Second, I would perfect the ROI process through the introduction of best practices. And finally, I would promote a dedication to detail and a commitment to compliance, critical to releasing PHI properly.