

CASE STUDY

Genesis Creates 'Healthier' System for Delivering Patient Records with RightFax

"RightFax has proven to be a good system that performs as expected. It gets the right patient information to the physicians who need it in a timely manner."

Folders overflowed with paper...retrieval and filing required around-the-clock management...physicians stayed late to check and sign files. Genesis Health System affiliates recognized the benefits of reducing paper and associated manual processes. Instead of sifting through stacks of paper and waiting at fax machines, healthcare professionals use imaging and e-document delivery solutions to speed information management electronically.

COMPANY BACKGROUND

Genesis Health System, www.genesishealth.com, is comprised of four hospital campuses and dozens of clinics serving communities across a 10-county, bi-state region of Iowa and Illinois. Carrying on the work of its predecessors, it has cared for residents for more than 130 years.

Genesis affiliates include Genesis Medical Center, Illini Hospital, DeWitt Community Hospital and other organizations. The group offers a full continuum of care including preventive, primary, acute and tertiary hospital care; home health and nursing home care; hospice; rehabilitation and long-term care. Combined, the affiliates assemble more than 675 licensed beds, 600 physicians, 5,000 staff members and hundreds of volunteers.

Genesis has earned recognition as one of the nation's top 100 Health Systems and has achieved medical firsts in the nation and the world. Meanwhile, according to the organization, Genesis remains focused on its mission to provide compassionate, quality care.

CHALLENGE

By necessity, hospitals are notoriously paper heavy organizations. Such was the case for Genesis Medical Center and Illini Hospital, affiliates within the Genesis Health System. "Whenever a patient visited a physician, it generated paper," Brian Casey, Genesis Medical Center Principal Information Technology Technician, explained. In the mid-'90s, all papers with patient information were stored in hundreds of folders on large shelves in the Health Information Management (HIM) office. "Some folders would get pretty thick, depending on the length of the patient's stay," Casey said.

Legal and health standards obligate physicians to review and sign patient records after visits. With paper based processes, physicians were required to call ahead and walk to the HIM office or request the information via fax. Either way, HIM employees would often spend up to 30 minutes digging through files to find and prepare charts for signature.

"We had dedicated staff members working around-the-clock to locate and then manually fax the documents," Casey said. "They spent a lot of time waiting at the fax machine hand-feeding papers and re-faxing when the documents didn't go through."

Casey estimated the HIM office, then and now, handles 23,000 faxed pages per month, nearly 800 every day of the week. With such critical, high-volume faxing, Genesis looked for a "healthier" system—one that replaced slow, manual processes with efficient, flexible options. A successful solution would fit Genesis' needs for speed and security, but require little training and maintenance. "Distributing patient information is a critical function that must be handled by a good system," Casey said. "And for easy maintenance, a good system is one I don't have to baby-sit everyday."

SOLUTION

A combination of solutions proved the most effective treatment. In 1997, Genesis Medical Center and Illini Hospital implemented McKesson (formerly Imnet) enterprise document imaging packaged with Captaris RightFax, the proven market leader in enterprise fax and e-document delivery.

Horizon Patient Folder (HPF) electronically captures, indexes, stores and retrieves patient and operational information. In contrast to manual faxing, RightFax electronically distributes the patient charts via less expensive, but timely methods.

"It was an easy choice to run with RightFax for fax-enabling our imaging system," Casey said. "The McKesson team described its successful partnership with RightFax and demonstrated the total solution."

"We likely save thousands of dollars per month using electronic imaging and faxing."

RightFax came highly recommended with integrated functionality. "RightFax has proven to be a good system that performs as expected," Casey said. "It gets the right patient information to the physicians who need it in a timely manner."

PAPERLESS DELIVERY

Using HPF, all medical records are available online. "It speeds up the process," Casey said. "Physicians can view, edit and electronically sign charts from any location, as long as they have an Internet connection."

When the information must be faxed, HIM staff members simply access the electronic chart and choose the fax option. RightFax stores contacts and phone numbers for quick addressing or users may enter a name and fax number for customization.

"There are HIM employees who have worked here from the beginning," Casey said. "With HPF and RightFax, they're much more productive and there are no more masses of paper everywhere. The office is nice and clean."

Adding up the savings related to unnecessary paper and toner supplies "could be mind-boggling," according to Casey. "Supplies are expensive, not to mention wear and tear on printers and fax machines," he said. "Add in the savings on filing folders and shelves and we likely save thousands of dollars per month using electronic imaging and faxing."

RightFax also handles paperless inbound fax receipt. Physicians often send faxes to the HIM department for legal compliance. "RightFax delivers the documents right into the HPF system to be indexed to individual patients," Casey said. "They are available for view within a few minutes."

FAST AND SECURE

Together HPF and RightFax have reduced the time requirements for HIM employees by close to 70 percent. "We were paying a few people to fax reports across three shifts—24 hours a day," Casey said. "With RightFax, we have the same number of HIM employees, but they are able to focus on other job duties and they only send faxes during one eight-hour shift. Overall, the system helps us save quite a bit on salary-related costs."

Casey further explained that users no longer needed to stand at the fax machine waiting for transmissions. Instead, they send the documents right at the desktop computer and receive confirmation reports immediately.

Effective RightFax reporting also supports Genesis in meeting HIPAA compliancy guidelines. The solution automatically tracks faxes along with recipients and transmission times. "Faxing is better for meeting privacy requirements," Casey said. "Unlike leaving a voicemail, we can show who is getting the information and when it was received."

HIGH USE FOR LOW MAINTENANCE

While productivity enhancements and related cost savings are benefits of using RightFax, Casey said ease-of-use is also welcomed "therapy" in comparison to alternative methods. "RightFax required virtually no training," he explained. "We just showed users how to type in a fax number or take information from the address book and they were sending patient records right away. It's pretty intuitive."

Maintenance requirements are also easy on the IT team. "In fact," Casey laughed, "We like to use the popular infomercial slogan: we just 'set it and forget it.'"

Casey continued, "Both HPF and RightFax have been very stable systems. We can't imagine taking them away."

Instead, Genesis looks to adding capabilities. "We could easily move to integrating faxing with desktop email," Casey said. "Right now, we're comfortable dedicating RightFax to the medical records process."

Thus far, RightFax has whipped the slower processes into shape, said Casey. "Our focus is on healthcare and providing the best we can to our patients," he summarized. "RightFax supports that mission."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Captaris is a leading provider of Business Information Delivery solutions that integrate, process and automate the flow of messages, data and documents. Captaris produces a suite of proven products and services, in partnership with leading enterprise technology companies, delivered through a global distribution network. Captaris has installed over 80,000 systems in 44 countries with 93 of the Fortune 100 using the company's award-winning products and services to reduce costs and increase the performance of critical business information investments. For more information please contact us at www.captaris.com or call +1.520.320.7000.

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