

CASE STUDY

COFFEE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER SUPPORTING THE EMR TRANSITION



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Coffee Regional Medical Center, Inc. (CRMC) operates a non-profit, acute care hospital in Douglas, GA. The new facility which opened in 1998 replaced the original facility constructed in Coffee Co. in 1953. The 170,000 square foot facility is designed with 88 inpatient beds and expanded outpatient service areas to promote multi-level patient care. CRMC was awarded “Hospital of the Year 2001-2002” by the GA Alliance of Community Hospitals and “Georgia Rural Hospital of the Year” for 2000-2001.

Like many healthcare facilities, CRMC is pursuing several long term initiatives, including transitioning from paperwork to electronic medical records (EMR) and improving patient safety through the use of barcoding technology. Administrators realized that they needed to replace paper-based forms processing with a forms automation system to complement these initiatives.

“CRMC had several projects underway that necessitated the need for a forms application that would allow us to develop not only standard forms with barcoded information but to also develop check & pay stub layouts,” says Pete Furlow, IT Director at CRMC.

To ensure they selected an electronic forms management system that had comprehensive functionality and would deliver return on investment, Furlow and his colleagues performed a thorough market analysis. This led them to Access’s Patient Flow System (PFS).

“We made the decision to go with Access because of the intuitive user interface and the flexibility the product offered,” Furlow says. “We replaced a Unix-based forms management application and a check printing system with the Access solution.”

Supporting the EMR Project

There are many systems involved in transitioning from a paper-based environment to a full, enterprise-wide EMR, defined as Stage 7 by HIMSS Analytics in its EMR Adoption Model. One crucial step often overlooked is electronic forms management, which works in concert with the health information system (HIS) and document management application to get information into the EMR. Products such as PFS can sit between the HIS and EMR to present information in a way that is user-friendly and conforms with the requirements of HIPAA, the Joint Commission and other regulatory statutes.

“EMR was one of the reasons CRMC was looking at forms automation vendors,” Furlow says. “We were implementing a new EMR system and needed a product that we could use to standardize and produce barcoded forms. We also needed a product that would allow us to send these forms to our document imaging system. Access’s products provide these functions plus the flexibility to utilize the product for other needs within the organization.”

Quick Facts

Focus: Non-profit, acute care hospital

Integration: McKesson Paragon

Access products used: Patient Flow System, e-Forms Repository, Image Portal, check printing module

Areas using Access systems: Patient registration, clinical floors, account payable, payroll





The Business Problems

Nurses spend time looking for paper forms

Manually processing forms limits information sharing, increases paper use and means forms may be duplicated or outdated

During HIS conversion patients would have to be registered on paper and their information would not be immediately available to clinical floors

Using a third-party system to manage lab reports is time-consuming and costly

The Solutions

Nurses and other clinical staff immediately access forms directly from any nursing station

Managing forms electronically reduces paper use and waste, improves forms availability and ensures only current forms are being used

Patients registered electronically during HIS conversion and clinical staff are able to instantly access the forms they needed

Image Portal interfaces lab reports directly into the document management system, reducing paper use and eliminating cost of third-party interfacing

Access's PFS is supporting CRMC's EMR project and patient safety initiative in the admissions department. When a staff member registers a patient in the McKesson Paragon system, the information goes into Access's e-Forms Repository (EFR) and is merged into the face sheet, consent forms and the other parts of the registration packet. These are then printed with barcodes. CRMC also used EFR when converting the HIS system.

"EFR enabled us to register patients and make their information available on our clinical floors during the HIS conversion," Furlow says. "It made the downtime period during the conversion more efficient than if we'd registered patients on paper."

CRMC is planning to introduce Access's e-Signature module in the registration department. This product enables hospitals to obtain a secure, legally acceptable patient signature on a tablet device, facilitating a one-time paperless admissions process that enhances the patient experience. The supporting software ensures tamper-proof encryption and authenticity of digital signatures and their associated source documents. This supports compliance with patient privacy and data protection legislation.

"With e-Signature we will further speed the registration process," Furlow says. "We will then use Image Portal to interface registration packets into our EMR system, which will save more paper and eliminate manual scanning."

Enhancing Clinical Processes

In addition to providing efficiency in the patient registration department, PFS and EFR are simplifying processes on clinical floors at CRMC. Nurses can immediately access the forms they need directly from any PC at any of the facility's nursing stations, rather than wasting time searching for paper forms in file cabinets.

"Over 80 percent of all forms – including physician orders, progress notes and nurses notes – are coming from EFR," Furlow says. "The Access system is helping us ensure that clinical staff members always have the most current forms available to them."

Early user adoption is a key factor in achieving return on investment from any software purchase. Staff members at CRMC quickly mastered the intuitive Access user interface.

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Improving Patient Safety and Care

Another benefit provided by managing forms electronically is improved version control. When using hundreds of paper forms, there may be outdated versions and duplicates in some areas of the hospital. Implementing Access's EFR has enabled CRMC to create a consolidated forms library, and to produce new forms more quickly and efficiently than if relying on a third-party forms vendor. A further advantage is that there is no longer the potential problem of illegible forms.

"EFR has helped improve patient safety because all forms are now current, consistent and legible," Furlow says. The Access system is also positively impacting patient care. "By



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providing forms automation and reducing the time a nurse spends looking for forms, writing on forms, sticking labels on forms and other manual tasks, nurses now have more time to spend with the patients and on meeting their needs,” Furlow continues.

CRMC is also using Access products to manage certain clinical reports in a more efficient manner. Access’s Image Portal can capture any print feed from third party systems and then import the files into the document management system. This eliminates the wasted time of preparing, scanning and manually indexing documents and other output.

“Using Access’s Image Portal to send lab reports directly into our EMR system eliminated third party interfacing, saving us time and money,” Furlow says.

Reducing Environmental Impact

By porting documents directly into the EMR system and reducing paper use in clinical areas and patient admissions, CRMC is reducing its environmental impact.

“With Access products we have reduced the amount of paper forms being printed,” Furlow says. “We no longer have pre-printed forms stacked in closets and other areas. When forms change or new forms are needed, EFR is updated and staff have immediate access to the updated form. We no longer are wasting stacks of old forms.”

CRMC is finding that Access products are as useful in administrative areas as they are in patient-focused departments. The facility is using Access’s check printing module for accounts payable (AP) and payroll checks. This application offers hospitals the flexibility to print checks on blank check safety paper. By printing high-quality checks on demand from a laser printer, hospitals can further reduce storage costs and eliminate waste from outdated checks.

“Access’s check printing solution gives us the flexibility to customize our printed checks and check stubs, so we can easily make a change in the system that is in place in time for the next payroll,” Furlow says.

Furlow feels that Access’s professional services staff has been integral to the success of CRMC’s forms automation project.

“Access has a great support team that is always helpful and responsive,” he says.





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