

# CASE STUDY

## MERCY MEDICAL CENTER SUPPORTING A SOLID DISASTER PLAN



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### Quick Facts

Location: Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Focus: Full service medical center

Access products used: Patient Flow System, e-Forms Repository, Patient Label and Reporting System, Check Printing Module, Patient Label System

Departments using Access: Emergency department, birthplace clinic, wound and treatment centers, cardiovascular lab, same day surgery

For more than 100 years, the 347-bed Mercy Medical Center has been providing exemplary care and service to residents of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and its surrounding communities. Founded on the principles of the Sisters of Mercy, the organization is committed to providing a patient- and family-centered system of care carried out by the finest employees and physicians.

Administrators at Mercy Medical realized that the cost of producing, duplicating and storing hard copies of forms could be eliminated with the deployment of a forms and workflow automation product. After a thorough market analysis they selected the Patient Flow System (PFS) from Access.

“We knew that Access’s product suite would improve patient safety and business continuity, but it was also a business decision,” says Vicki Wittmer, systems analyst at Mercy Medical. “Access has proven that their solutions save hospitals time and money.”

Mercy Medical is using PFS in the emergency and same-day surgery departments, birthplace clinic, wound and treatment centers and cardiovascular (CV) lab.

“PFS is particularly effective in departments that have high patient volume and large, complex forms such as consent to treat and discharge instructions,” Wittmer says. “It enables us to easily manage and personalize forms packets for each patient care area.”

Many forms automation products have functionality centered on the needs of one department, and lack the interoperability required to work effectively in multiple areas. In contrast, Wittmer believes that Access’s products comprise an effective enterprise solution.

“Any area of the hospital that has a large amount of forms can benefit from PFS and Evolution,” she says. “We’re seeing how powerful these systems are across the facility.”

As well as using PFS in patient-focused areas, Mercy Medical is using Access’s Check Printing Module in the back office, where it has streamlined the processing of paid check deposits and AP checks and increased security.

### Supporting Disaster Planning

In June 2008, the Cedar River burst its banks, with waters cresting above 30 feet. The city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa lost power, and businesses and homes in the flood plain were overwhelmed by the surging torrent. The basement at Mercy Medical Center flooded, and many of the facility’s paper forms were destroyed or damaged.

Hospital administrators decided that the recently purchased Access system could be a vital part of the solution to their disaster planning and business continuity challenges. Instead of relying on vulnerable paper documents, Mercy Medical now manages its forms





## The Business Problems

Flooding destroyed forms in Mercy Medical's basement

Lack of a comprehensive barcoding solution creates the possibility of patient ID errors

Registering patients is difficult during HIS downtime

Staff members spend hours manually preparing paper forms

## The Solutions

Electronic forms solution ensures business continuity in the event of another flood

Barcoded wristbands and medication labels help ensure patient safety

EFR enables staff to register patients and provide care during HIS downtime

Forms automation gives employees more time to focus on patient care

in Access's e-Forms Repository (EFR), and prints them on demand.

If Mercy Medical was hit by a flood or other natural disaster, the forms that the facility needs to offer patients uninterrupted service would no longer be at risk. In addition, the costs and delays of replacing thousands of paper forms would be avoided. Mercy Medical is scanning its historical paper forms so that information for previous patients is secure and protected in all circumstances.

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As at most hospitals, Mercy Medical sometimes experiences downtime during upgrades and other scheduled maintenance to the health information system (HIS). There can also be unexpected technical issues that temporarily prevent personnel from accessing patient demographics. Mercy Medical's IS team has found a solution.

"When our HIS has downtime, Access's PFS and EFR allow us to get to the patient information needed to deliver care and register patients," Wittmer says. "These systems are a great complement to our Meditech HIS."

## Improving Patient Safety

The Access PFS suite is working in tandem with Mercy's other EMR systems, including a wristband barcoding application. Access's Patient Label System (PLS) prints two-dimensional barcodes on wristbands and forms, which ensures positive patient identification and facilitates automated indexing of forms with patient records.

"With PFS and the Patient Label System, we know that we're gathering accurate demographics that will help us correctly identify patients throughout their visit," Wittmer says. "Our Access system has definitely improved patient safety."

Another aspect of Mercy Medical's ongoing patient safety initiative involves creating a closed loop medication administration process that ensures patients receive the correct medicines and doses prescribed to them. The Access Patient Labeling and Reporting System (PLRS) assists in this process by outputting barcoded labels that are matched with patients' barcoded wristbands to help support accurate bedside medication verification (BMV).

"With Access's PLRS, nurses use barcoded labels when administering medication, to ensure they're matching the correct patient with the correct medication," Wittmer says. "It eliminates errors because they're performing verification right at the patient's bedside."

## Saving Time and Money

A key factor in realizing return on investment (ROI) from any technology purchase is early user adoption. It didn't take long for Mercy Medical's employees to master PFS.

"Access's PFS is a very user-friendly system," Wittmer says. "It's simple for nurses and other staff members to use, and that makes training easy."

With many IT projects, the IT/IS team can struggle to get people to change the way they've



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worked to incorporate new systems. At Mercy Medical, users quickly recognized the time savings that Access’s PFS provides.

“The nursing staff’s enthusiasm about PFS is driving expansion of our forms automation project,” Wittmer says. “By the time the first four departments had gone live with EFR I had people from departments across the hospital telling me they wanted it their areas. Their excitement makes my job more enjoyable.”

One of the challenges Mercy Medical faced when relying on paper forms was the time drain of staff searching through drawers to find forms, assemble them in the correct order, affix labels on them and then file them. With PFS, this cumbersome process has been simplified.

“We can now print the same forms packet for multiple patients with one click, and the forms are in the correct chart order,” Wittmer says. “Nurses don’t have to waste time preparing and labeling forms, so they get more time with patients.”

Using Access’s EFR to manage forms in a central location instead of dealing with disparate paper forms is another way Mercy Medical’s staff is recovering time.

“Forms are revised once and as soon as that’s done they’re available to every department using EFR,” Wittmer says. “There has been a huge time savings for people who manage our forms.”

In addition to boosting productivity, PFS is cutting financial and environmental costs at Mercy Medical.

“The treatment center had reduced its label use by 50 percent and same day surgery is saving 16 cents per patient because it’s using less labels,” Wittmer says. “When you consider the additional reduction in paper use and duplication and the increased productivity, the Access system is providing substantial savings.”

### A Successful Partnership

Hospitals’ IT/IS teams manage many systems and initiatives, and receiving prompt technical support is a must for these busy professionals.

“The Access team is great to work with,” Wittmer says. “Any time I enter a support request online I get a rapid response and issue resolution is explained in a way that’s easy to understand. I’ve always had the help I needed.”

Mercy Medical plans to extend its forms automation project to inpatient departments, and to start using Access’s Evolution, a browser-based online forms and business process solution.

“The ability to route forms electronically in Evolution will have a great impact, and will help our transition from paper to an electronic environment,” Wittmer says.





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