Three reasons for eliminating paper-based fax in healthcare

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Fax volume in healthcare is at an all-time high. Even in today's digital world, with the adoption of Electronic Medical Records and advances in tech-enabled communications, the primary method of communications in the healthcare industry remains the fax machine.

A recent National Physicians survey found that 63 percent of respondents stated fax was their primary form of communication.[1] Many providers still view fax as the most secure form of communications, and it serves as a bridge when systems do not connect. Even health systems that have transitioned to digital document transmissions must continue to utilize fax to collaborate with other systems or community partners that are less technologically advanced. While fax remains ingrained in healthcare, managing a large fleet of disparate devices can rack up high costs, bottlenecks, security and compliance risks.

For those who have implemented digital fax or direct messaging, the bottlenecks associated with traditional fax have simply shifted. Historically, bottlenecks were found on fax machine trays. Users had to spend time sorting through pages to find important patient information. In the new digital age of enterprise fax, the bottleneck is now the group mailbox or network folder that stores all the faxes. There are digital pages lying on digital trays.

But we can transform this today with advanced cloud-based fax technology that fits seamlessly into existing workflows, creating no additional steps or increased workload for users.

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Let's take a look at three main reasons your organization should make the shift to a more sophisticated digital transmission of patient data.

Issue 1:

Fax machines provide limited data governance

The Situation

Manual, paper-based fax increases the risk of human error, like misdialed destinations and abandoned trays, which causes privacy and security concerns. In a survey, more than 4 in 10 healthcare respondents admitted to having read a paper fax intended for someone else.[2] Many breaches go unnoticed, and health systems cannot manage what they can't measure. A disparate fleet of dozens of fax devices provides no audit trail in the case of a breach.

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[2] Souce: Opinion Matters Survey.

The Solution

In an environment where privacy and security breaches are top of mind, Ricoh Healthcare Direct Services provides a data governance solution that reduces the risks associated with traditional fax technologies. Sender and receiver authentication are achieved through X.509 digital signatures. The content confidentiality and integrity are ensured using S/MIME encryption. This allows the health system to manage privacy and security more proactively.

Health systems can also reduce risk by capturing an audit trail of who is sending a fax and from where and when it originated. By employing Ricoh Healthcare Direct Services, fax communications and transmission processes are centrally managed across the enterprise in a cloud-based digital fax solution built on Direct Messaging.

Issue 2:

Paper-based fax communication lacks interoperability and increase costs

The Situation

Because of interoperability challenges, many healthcare employees rely on costly manual processes to collaborate. Yet standalone fax machines can be a bottleneck and a costly manual stopgap. It costs $250 billion to process 30 billion healthcare transactions each year, of which 15 billion are faxes.[3]

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The Solution

The replacement of antiquated processes like faxing is key to improving care. Ricoh Healthcare Direct Services enables a deeper connection with the health systems community of partners and associates by overcoming the challenges of faxing and interoperability with disparate clinical systems. Connectivity, collaboration, and patient experience are improved when the health system can structure any type of document and deliver it to their partners, with or without a direct messaging enabled EHR technology. This helps health systems pursue interoperability while also providing easier and more reliable information sharing between providers.

Ricoh Healthcare Direct Services provides real-time access to patient information throughout the health system's care continuum. This leads to more informed decision making that reduces staff interruptions, improving provider experience and patient care.
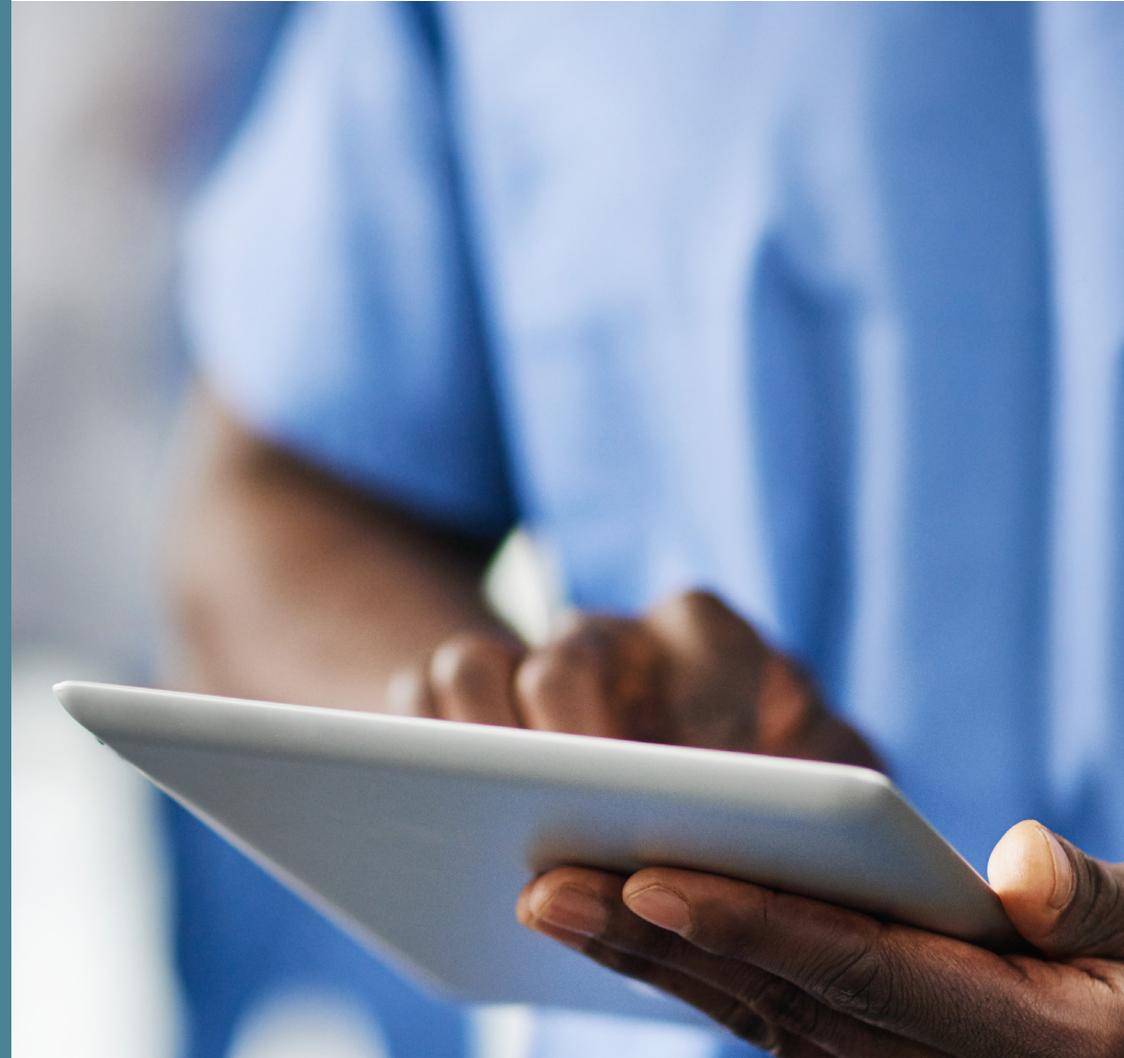
Issue 3:

Some direct messaging and digital enterprise fax solutions create workflow disruptions

The Situation

Advances in communications often disrupt existing workflows and create extra work for employees. Current direct messaging solutions require clinicians to open multiple TIFFs or PDFs to find what they need, save and rename files, and finally enter it into the direct message software and forward to the intended recipient. These extra steps can increase physician frustration while building up bottlenecks.

42 percent of respondents named "time employees spend sending and receiving paper-based faxes" as the top challenge and "the cost of paper-based, manual faxing" as second[4].

The Solution

Ricoh Healthcare Direct Services fits seamlessly into existing workflows, creating no additional steps or increased workload for users. By merging new capabilities into existing habits, health systems can achieve the benefits of direct messaging – better security and compliance, lower cost and streamlined workflows, and real-time interoperability and information sharing – without inconveniencing users.

Getting started

Fax in healthcare isn't going anywhere anytime soon. But by enhancing current device management with a centralized, direct messaging fax solution, health systems can improve security and interoperability while driving down costs. The tools exist, as does the information to implement them. Here's a few to get you started:

Focusing on key areas

Transitioning to value-based care means healthcare systems are facing a mountain of obstacles: inaccessible data, manual processes, lack of collaboration, impaired patient communication, changing regulatory mandates, rising costs and balancing security and risk with efficiencies and outcomes. Moving from a document-centric to a data-centric environment helps you overcome these challenges. You can automate paper intensive workflows and manual processes, personalize interactions with patients, comply with regulations and enhance collaboration among the care team. Get started.

Direct Messaging

Providing exceptional patient care depends on the availability of healthcare information throughout the continuum of care. This comes from many sources and in many forms — including orders, referrals, physician notes, patient history, physicals and test results.

Outdated methods — such as traditional paper-based faxing — not only slow down communication, they can also endanger patients, as well as their private information, and drive up costs. Consider making the shift from fax to direct messaging and improve the way you transfer and manage critical patient information. Get started.

Contact the Ricoh Healthcare team to learn more about the next generation of fax communications and how healthcare organizations can enable proactive, collaborative care across the continuum.

To learn more, visit www.ricoh-usa.com/healthcare

Resources

Check out this these resources to keep you up to speed on the latest faxing in Healthcare trends and insight:

One step at a time: building the next generation of efficient health system communication.

Large national health system transforms faxing to reduce cost, increase efficiency and improve

Is your organization primed for next generation healthcare connectivity?