

Case Study

healthcare

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Hospital partners with Ricoh to cure ailing information management processes and get prescriptions to patients faster

The partnership with Ricoh turned out to be just the right prescription to cure the pharmacy's challenges. The new workflow helps pharmacy staff achieve high levels of medication order efficiency, accuracy and transparency—and deliver very quick turnarounds for clinicians and patients.

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Managing prescription information is a tall order for a busy pharmacy. With more than 1,000 medication orders a day from nearly 40 nursing stations throughout this hospital, speed and transparency in processing medication information is nearly as important as accuracy. When too much time elapses to get a prescription filled, clinicians are frustrated, patients are anxious and staff morale takes a tumble.

The workflow, technology and management of information in its onsite pharmacy was lackluster. With patient outcomes and staff morale at stake, the hospital sought a fresh new approach to make its pharmacy order information available anywhere, anytime—and get medications to patients faster.

CHALLENGE

There were many pain points in the pharmacy's primarily paper-centric workflow. Medication orders came in through a variety of disparate means—by phone, fax, pressurized tube or hand delivery. Adding to the chaos, part of the hospital was using electronic order entry and part were using paper-based orders.

Clinicians had no way to see the status of medication orders they requested, causing them to routinely phone the pharmacy and tie up busy pharmacists with status updates. So much so, pharmacists were taking longer to process medication orders—compounding the frustration.

CHALLENGE

- Mix of paper-centric and electronic workflow
- No transparency to see order status
- No way to automatically timestamp and prioritize orders
- Phone status checks taking pharmacists away from order processing

SOLUTION

- In-depth analysis of workflow challenges
- DocuScripts integration with Ricoh MFPs
- Digital queue with each order labeled "stat" or "normal"
- Transparency to see order progress in queue
- Time stamping and automatic labeling

RESULTS

- High levels of medication order efficiency, accuracy and transparency
- "Stat" orders now complete within 12 minutes
- 60 percent fewer phone status calls
- Far more precise tracking
- Improved employee morale and patient satisfaction
- Automatic order archives for analysis and review

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Paper created problems of its own. Since paper-based orders were in stacks, pharmacists were sometimes unable to attend to the most urgent prescriptions that needed to be filled. Furthermore, orders were sometimes stamped with the previous location of a patient who had since moved, causing prescriptions to occasionally be delivered to the wrong dispensing area.

Even worse, when fax machines ran out of paper, orders weren't even received or processed until a nurse or doctor phoned the pharmacy to follow up. And with no timestamps on orders, the pharmacy didn't have a way to track order timing or effectively analyze workflow bottlenecks.

SOLUTION

Some solutions were glaringly obvious while others required fresh perspective and expertise. Rather than itemizing its challenges and attempting to tackle each one separately, the hospital knew a more strategic approach would pay off in the long run. They brought in Ricoh, their provider of MFPs hospital-wide, to provide a 30,000-foot view of its pharmacy information management and workflow challenges, considering the needs of all its users—pharmacists, doctors and nursing staff alike.

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Working with key hospital stakeholders, Ricoh conducted an intensive assessment that uncovered issues throughout the entire medication ordering process from initiation through delivery. They considered the needs of all shifts and unearthed opportunities to streamline and automate the paper-centric system to make information work for everyone.

Based on Ricoh's strategic analysis and assessment, the hospital decided to digitize and automate its pharmacy workflow using Ricoh's Pharmacy Order Manager Solution—featuring DocuScripts software integrated with Ricoh multifunctional printers (MFPs). This technology allows clinicians to scan hardcopy prescriptions directly into MFPs, which are then sent to the pharmacy in electronic format.

In the new workflow, hardcopy medication orders—written by doctors on pieces of paper imprinted with the relevant patient's scannable bar code—are scanned immediately from the nursing station using the nearest MFP. The order is automatically entered into the new digital pharmacy queue and each medication arrives at the pharmacy labeled "stat" or "normal" priority, depending on what the issuer selected.

Pharmacists can see their entire medication work in queue at a glance on several large-format LCD displays. Each entry is time stamped and automatically labeled with the originating location of the MFP used to send the order.

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RESULTS

The partnership with Ricoh turned out to be just the right prescription to cure the pharmacy's information mobility challenges. The new workflow helps pharmacy staff achieve high levels of medication order efficiency, accuracy and transparency—and deliver very quick turnarounds for clinicians and patients.

Now that they can see every medication order online, hospital pharmacists are better able to prioritize prescription processing. Orders are filled faster, communication has improved between nurses and pharmacists, staff accountability and management have increased and the hospital has achieved new levels of efficiency around staffing and work scheduling.

All of this has been accomplished by focusing on constantly improving patient care.

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Faster turnarounds, improved visibility

Pharmacists are receiving 60 percent fewer phone calls requesting order status, helping them stay on task and fill orders faster. As a result, the average "stat" order is now completed within 12 minutes.



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Decentralized viewing of the medication order—plus dramatically reducing phone-based check-ins—has enabled pharmacists to concentrate on their work and process orders more quickly and efficiently. Now, pharmacists electronically mark each line item of the order as it's completed, which is a far more precise tracking method than the pharmacy's previous paper-based system.

New clarity, increased morale

The hospital's new electronic workflow also allows the pharmacy to compare order urgency. Time stamping throughout the workflow enables the hospital to analyze and improve its overall medication delivery performance as each order is now tracked from creation through completion.

In addition to quick delivery of "stat" orders, nursing satisfaction has risen with the timely receipt of less urgent medications. Nurses and pharmacists can see pending orders at any time and monitor their position in the queue. When there are questions, pharmacists and clinicians can instant message each other through the new DocuScripts software rather than picking up the phone. And all pharmacists doing rounds can now check into the system to monitor the pharmacy workflow through their laptops—giving them access to the status of medication orders anytime, anywhere.

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Automatic archive, greater patient satisfaction

The new digitized records will have long-term benefits for the pharmacy. The orders are automatically archived in the records management system for analysis and review, which dramatically streamlines the pharmacy's auditing process.

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