



CASE STUDY

Scanning Successfully Moves In-House.

As a growing 100-bed hospital, NEA Baptist in Jonesboro, Arkansas suffered from space problems for medical records and their FTEs were stretched to the limit. No electronic health record system was envisioned when they opted to outsource scanning. This action turned out to be the first step on a journey of transition.

Tackling the Most Immediate Problem

By purging older records annually and sending to EDCO Group Inc. for conversion, two benefits were realized. First, the file room was relieved of enough paper charts to create shelving space for expansion. Second, these were converted to electronic images and placed on the network. Charts could be quickly located with a couple of clicks at a computer. These decisions started them on the right path toward the goal of an EMR.

Recognizing Deeper Issues

“Converting older records only helped us keep up with growth, but didn’t solve the real issues,” said Cindy Teague, HIM director. “We still had to deal with paper charts remaining in the file room and new visits. Having only 13 FTEs required us to constantly make time to get files on the shelves. I couldn’t dedicate people to just this task.”

While older records were now electronic, the incoming charts still required folders and labels, filing and interfiling, then pulling and copying for requests. Invariably, as soon as a chart was sent to be scanned, a request was made and it would have to be returned.

To give NEA Baptist access to the more recent charts, EDCO started picking up records and scanning once a month. The benefits of this process included no need to file new visits into an existing chart or create a new one. This

reduced folders and tabs and eliminated the potential for misfiled charts.

Faster Turn-Around

Eventually, Teague wanted even quicker access to newly completed charts with a goal of a few days from discharge to an electronic file. She visited another hospital that was using EDCO for in-house scanning and saw how well that was working.

“When you don’t have an EMR and one is not on the horizon, scanning in-house is the next best thing,” remarked Teague. NEA Baptist decided to do just that.

Finding Better Solutions

NEA Baptist in Jonesboro, AR, is a prime example of using technology to cost-effectively gain efficiency before an EMR is implemented. Realizing that their resources were stretched too thin, NEA chose EDCO’s two-step process using back file conversion and on-site day-forward scanning to help them reclaim space, save hours of labor, and initiate the first step in an electronic document management system.

“We didn’t have the manpower or expertise to scan ourselves so we asked EDCO to move their process into our facility. We found that more cost effective,” Teague said. “They provide two full-time operators and scanning equipment.”

Because EDCO’s people do not get distracted with other department projects, one person can

index and scan at least 9000 images in a day. These employees each work 40 hours per week and that is enough to keep up.

As soon as the physician completes the record, it goes straight to prepping, indexing and scanning. Prepping involves removing staples, unfolding pages, and anything else needed to get a good image. A face sheet is inserted between each account number and the record is scanned. Using the hospital's MPI on the scanning server automatically populates all the index information. With electronic records, loose sheets can be scanned at any time and become attached to the rest of the chart regardless of when it was scanned.

Since the files never leave the hospital, access is much easier. Now there is no hunting for the location.

Factoring In Costs

The driving factor for scanning on-site was faster retrieval, but of course cost had to be considered. Initially, it looked like on-site would be more expensive than sending records out for scanning. But, Teague soon realized that the cost was off-set by eliminating consumables such as folders and labels and most importantly freeing up employee time for filing. There was also an enormous time difference in pulling and sifting through paper for copying versus clicking on pages and sending to a printer. With no shelving needed, Teague was able to convert that area to more office space.

The hospital only pays for scanned images. There is no per-hour cost, no employee benefits required, and no equipment and maintenance investment.

Doing It Over Again

Teague is very satisfied with her decisions. EDCO made certain that they had the right employees, ones who could handle the repetitiveness of the job. Scanner selection based on quality and function is also important to ensure images are clear and can be indexed properly. As a safety measure, images go through a quality control process and Teague has paper records shipped to the EDCO SecureStore underground facility for a designated holding period.

Future Moves

Because NEA Baptist has been purchased by Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation in Memphis, they will move to the corporation's Horizon Patient Folder (HPF) from McKesson. The good news is that EDCO's scanned images will populate the data repository when it is implemented. Electronic input will reduce paper even further.

