



CASE STUDY

Scan-on-Demand Upgrades Storage.

One HIM director found an unexpected ally in the Joint Commission. Marshall Regional Medical Center, Marshall, TX, was headed for day-forward scanning when they got a mandate from JCAHO: remove stored medical records from an old hospital building with a leaky roof, STAT.

Storage included film, paper and old master patient index cards in metal boxes that were difficult to access. HIM Director Linda Pickering had wanted to make a change and the JCAHO report provided the needed impetus.

Sorting Options

Pickering gathered cost information for four options. She considered staff time and costs for purging, storage, boxing, labeling, loading, transporting, destruction, fees, retrieval, scanning, prepping and document indexing. These included:

1. Building new storage
2. In-house scanning
3. Services from a local vendor
4. Outsourcing to a national vendor

“We realized we could have the backfile scanned more cheaply than investing several million in a new storage building,” she said, “particularly when everyone’s going to electronic records anyway.”

However, scanning the stored records opened up a whole set of issues that the hospital was not prepared to address in the time required to satisfy JCAHO. A detailed side-by-side comparison of the options convinced administration that EDCO’s solution was the best option.

That solution involved moving all of the records from hospital’s storage to the EDCO SecureStore facility. EDCO won the job because they could:

1. Remove the records immediately
2. Offer a competitive price
3. Deliver requested records promptly
4. Work effectively with the staff

Finding Better Solutions

Marshall Regional Medical Center, Marshall, TX, was advised to address their backfile of records from an old hospital storage building by JCAHO. The result was a new storage system that freed up HIM FTEs and increased caregiver satisfaction with quicker response to chart requests.

Scan-on-Demand

The primary benefit for selecting EDCO was the scan-on-demand RetrievalNet system that returns paper and film documents electronically. Anyone at the hospital with authorization could use a computer with internet access to request a chart through the encrypted RetrievalNet site 24/7. With this system, there was no software to buy.

EDCO quickly trained Pickering’s staff to download the records into the hospital’s network. Staff in surgery and emergency now request records directly from EDCO after hours.

EDCO Retrieval Team locates the record, scans the sections of the chart needed, then alert the user to view, print, or download as electronic files.

Because EDCO stores and retrieves both paper and film, the hospital could avoid the hassle of maintaining and handling different archival formats. And, an added benefit was that retrieval requests were returned as electronic records.

Reaping the Benefits

"We haven't had any problems and we request records constantly, every hour of every day," Pickering says. "Once the staff receives the scanned images, they simply print rather than having to copy. Time for release of information has been markedly reduced, and physicians and staff are happier."

The FTEs who used to haul records back and forth to storage have, along with the filing coordinator, been freed up to do other things. Four part-time student positions have been left unfilled.

Marshall RMC was able to meet JCAHO requirements and upgrade their storage process. Now, new records are held until EDCO's regular monthly pickup.

If she had it to do over... "I'd do it sooner," Pickering says emphatically.

