

St. John Health System

New efficiencies, enhanced patient care through enterprise content management



Business overview

With more than 700 physicians and 4,500 employees, St. John Health System is one of the largest and most respected healthcare providers in Oklahoma. It's anchored by Tulsa's 560-bed St. John Medical Center, a regional leader in radiology, cardiology, oncology, urology, wellness, women's health, and physical rehabilitation. In addition to St. John Medical Center, St. John Health System oversees more than a dozen medical centers, renal dialysis facilities, primary care physician offices, and laboratory draw sites throughout Oklahoma.

Challenges

Healthcare providers today face a complex juggling act to control ever-rising costs as much as possible without compromising the quality of patient care. For St. John Health System, one way to operate more efficiently was to automate and streamline manual, paper-based processes. St. John focused on improving the routing, approval, and distribution of standard operating procedures (SOPs) as well as several other document-intensive processes.

Inefficient SOP management processes

SOPs govern virtually every business and patient care process at St. John, from human resources and employee policies to nursing procedures for various types of treatments. Business and medical staff have a critical requirement to access the most current versions of these documents; yet, the old paper-based system for routing, approving, and releasing SOPs was time consuming and created barriers to efficiency.

Under the old system, an SOP publisher would attach a routing slip to the paper document, make as many copies as required, and then distribute them to reviewers. "Often, the system would bog down at this point because the SOP would get buried in other paperwork on reviewers' desks," said Stacy Boone, application administrator at St. John. "The document owner would have to physically track down all the different copies."

Once the publisher received changes from all reviewers, the changes would be incorporated and the process repeated for final approval. At sign-off, hard copies of the approved SOP would then be distributed to the appropriate departments to be stored in binders for reference. "Because human intervention was required, we had no efficient way of assuring that all of the binders would be updated with the most current version," said Boone. "Managers, nursing staff, and other employees needed better assurance that they were accessing the most current version of SOPs."

EMC solution

For the solution, St. John chose the EMC® Documentum® content management platform to automate the end-to-end processes of creating, routing, approving, and distributing SOPs. A separate application for business documents features an integration with the Kofax document capture solution for scanning and storing hard-copy documents.

Streamlined SOP review and approval

To date, more than 125 SOP publishers use the new system to create, revise, route, and approve updates to SOPs. The Documentum electronic workflow—customized to meet the business process needs of St. John—is an important feature, enabling an SOP publisher to specify the persons required to review/approve an SOP, and then automatically routing the document to the reviewers. Persons who do not respond to the request within a specified period receive e-mail reminders, and the publisher receives notifications that enable him or her to keep track of the document's status with various reviewers. "Workflow management is one of the huge benefits of the system," said Boone. "Now, publishers don't have to spend time manually tracking down the document with various reviewers. They have an instant view of who has reviewed which SOP, and this allows them to keep the process moving."

In fact, the new system has drastically reduced the time required to route and approve a new or updated SOP from hours, or sometimes days, to often just minutes. "Not only are publishers able to work more efficiently, but the system also allows the reviewers to stay on top of their workload," said Boone.

"The EMC Documentum platform takes the guesswork out of finding and applying the correct standard operating procedures. Nurses and other healthcare workers can always be sure they have the most up-to-date versions of patient care directives, which helps them be more efficient and deliver more consistent care."

Stacy Boone, Application Administrator

Secure access to the most current SOPs

Once an SOP is approved, the system automatically publishes it to the appropriate department's SOP folder where the employees can then reference it as needed. Since the SOPs are stored in a secure repository, publishers can attach access levels to each document ensuring that only authorized reviewers can make changes.

SOPs are organized according to logical hierarchies that make it easy for users to navigate through and identify the SOPs they need—or they can search on SOPs by title, subject, keywords, or other SOP properties. Users access the system via an easy-to-use browser interface based on EMC Documentum Webtop.

In the nursing division, SOPs outlining general policies that apply to all nursing departments are stored in a central nursing folder. SOPs for specific nursing areas such as critical care or oncology are stored in their respective folders. The nursing division has its own website, a component of St. John's intranet, which provides a link to the SOPs together with other nursing-specific content.

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Beyond SOPs: Better-prepared patients

In addition to the SOP management system, Documentum provides an important link between hospital departments and referring physicians within St. John clinics, to ensure that patients enter the hospital better prepared for certain procedures. The radiology department, for instance, posts patient prep instructions to the Documentum repository for a certain radiotherapy procedure. At the clinic, the referring doctor is able to access the information and give advance instructions that normally would not be delivered until the patient entered the hospital—saving time for both patient and technician. Equally important, educating the patient about an upcoming procedure often eases his/her mind and makes the experience more bearable.

New efficiencies in patient service and seminar management

Another Documentum application captures and manages patient correspondence and many other types of business office documents. Via the Kofax integration, letters received from patients regarding billing and other matters are scanned directly into the Documentum repository and automatically indexed by account number. Accounting personnel are able to provide a timely response to patient queries by searching on the account number, which returns all pertinent documents and correspondence related to the inquiry. According to Boone, several thousand documents are scanned into the system every day.

The Documentum content management platform has proved useful to St. John in many other ways. Another application, for instance, enables physicians to schedule and organize educational seminars for physicians electronically. Many of the documents related to the seminars, such as registration forms, contain sensitive information. With the new system, office personnel can scan the documents directly into the repository, where only authorized personnel may access them. "This application alone has brought about significant time savings and efficiencies both within the department as well as when servicing physicians and auditors, and the information is much more secure," said Boone.

Summary

St. John Health System has implemented the EMC Documentum content management system to automate many previously inefficient manual processes, such as routing and approval of SOPs, capturing and sharing patient prep instructions, responding to patient billing inquiries, and organizing medical seminars. Healthcare workers and other personnel are able to access the SOPs and other documents they need in order to do their jobs, and they can be assured they are working with the most up-to-date versions of the documents. The new system has increased efficiency for many areas at St. John, resulting in cost savings and enhanced patient care.



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