

Case Study

Northwood
HEALTH SYSTEMS

Accelerates

Chart Updates From Hours
to Minutes

Streamlines

Administrative Processes

Saves

Time for Clinicians

Northwood Health Systems Automates Patient Workflows to Enhance Care

Focused on integrating solid business principles with sound clinical practices, Northwood embarked on an IT strategy to streamline its administrative functions and to integrate clinical records into one harmonious system using AutoStore® from Kofax and Microsoft SharePoint.

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Northwood HEALTH SYSTEMS

Meet Northwood Health Systems

Cradled in the Ohio River Valley, Wheeling West Virginia is home to Northwood Health Systems, a leader in providing quality care for patients of all ages with emotional problems, intellectual disabilities, mental illness, and drug and alcohol addictions. Privately held, Northwood has more than 500 employees and serves 3,000 patients at more than 19 clinical and residential facilities located across three counties in northern West Virginia.

Products in Use

Kofax AutoStore®

Focus

Document capture, electronic health records

Challenge

Like all healthcare facilities, Northwood has faced many challenges in recent years with increased regulatory requirements, an expanding patient load due to the Affordable Care Act, changes to billing and operational processes, and requirements for electronic health record (EHR) technology to achieve Meaningful Use qualification from the Department of Health and Human Services.

To address these new imperatives, the Northwood IT department first deployed a robust Microsoft SharePoint content management system, which stores all medical patient information and other business documents related to day-to-day operations. While the SharePoint solution was perfect for content management and retrieval, it lacked an enterprise capture and input solution.

The Northwood IT group was also dealing with a variety of disparate tools to load paper and electronic documents into SharePoint. The pressure was on to find a more efficient approach to data capture and retrieval.

Solution

Northwood IT Director, Tom Dzmura, was charged with tackling the challenge. After determining the required outcomes to the mission, he selected Kofax AutoStore, an enterprise capture solution which securely integrates Northwood's various input sources—including paper documents and digital files—and provides a unified platform for the clinical and business workflows that support Northwood's mission.

The first phase of the implementation introduced Kofax AutoStore into Northwood's business processes. "We retrofitted the existing Accounts Payable and Human Resources SharePoint libraries first," says Dzmura. "We knew that the medical records project was going to be a huge effort, as there were more than 3.9 million papers in our previous ECM system. We then transitioned our clinical records into the new system."

Northwood processes an average of 500,000 documents per year. With support from Kofax, the organization designed a system that intelligently identifies, processes and securely routes documents into SharePoint.

"On average, we handle more than 10,000 documents per week, which are submitted in all sorts of ways," Dzmura adds. "Documents are captured either in batches or individually, each with a unique barcode or a standard optical character recognition [OCR] header on one or more pages. Then they are processed, sorted and split as necessary by the Kofax Solution."

The inbound documents processed by Kofax AutoStore originate from a mixed-fleet of 50 multifunction peripherals (MFPs), web apps, Microsoft InfoPath, or a host of other electronic workflows. The Kofax solutions support more than 25 workflows for document scanning and electronic inflow. These processes automatically organize patient information, including Medical Necessity Assessments (MNAs), Treatment Plans, Progress Notes and more, from referral sources, lab work, RX and other providers, as well as administrative systems such as Accounts Payable and Human Resources.

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"We've had SharePoint in use as our CORE medical records document imaging repository for about two years, but have now been able to build in some very nice user interfaces in SharePoint to permit easy search and retrieval of the medical records cataloged in the patient folders, and an export utility for Medical Records extraction and submission to other providers or legal entities," Dzmura says.

The new system is not only secure, protecting all patient and administrative records, but also greatly increases collaboration among staff, critical in point-of-care situations where quick and secure access is needed.

With Kofax solutions' improved processing speed and accuracy, scanned clinical documents are part of the patient's COMPLETE chart in minutes rather than hours.

Dzmura also points to the flexibility of the solution as a key factor. At one point in the project, Northwood needed to process thousands of documents simultaneously. Using the multi-server architecture of Kofax AutoStore, the organization was able to load-balance the work to complete the task efficiently.

A document imaging server farm allowed Northwood to send larger documents to the least busy of two large document OCR engines, and smaller documents to the least busy of four small document OCR engines. This helped get the smaller, more numerous documents processed quickly while pushing the 200+ page jobs through a separate OCR pathway.

Results

With an integrated system for managing business, administrative and clinical records, Northwood has streamlined its operations. Increased efficiency is helping the organization deliver a high level of patient care, and maintain regulatory compliance.

According to Dzmura, Northwood's top three IT goals are to leverage advanced technology to provide safe, efficient, cost effective healthcare; to create innovative solutions to deliver safe, quality care to increase the bottom line; and to eliminate tasks that are repetitive and error prone and replace them with technology solutions.

According to a member of Northwood's Regulatory Compliance group, clinical charges in the EHR are audited every hour to ensure that the appropriate supporting documentation has been attached. Because the cycle time from submission to the patient record is so short, clinical staff see updates within minutes, and a full audit trail of each transaction is stored in SharePoint.

The near-real-time capabilities of Kofax AutoStore and the SharePoint Document Imaging Repository have revolutionized communication of patient data across the three counties in rural West Virginia that Northwood serves.

Documents submitted at geographically distant locations now become part of the patient's medical record within minutes, enabling clinical staff to collaborate more effectively and save valuable time. For example, therapists, physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners, and case managers who submit documents at remote sites can have their clinical documentation available for review by senior psychology and medical staff almost instantly as part of the patient's chart.

"Northwood prides itself on the high level of service and patient care we bring to our communities," adds Dzmura. "With this advanced system, we are definitely supporting that mission at all levels."

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