

CASE STUDY

MERCY REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER / ACHIEVING COMPLETE EMR AND REAL ROI



“We recognized that a forms automation system could deliver greater return on investment for our EMR project, and the solution from Access was the perfect fit.”

Quick Facts

Name: Mercy Regional Health Center

Location: Manhattan, Kansas

Focus: Acute care

Number of hospitals: 2

Staff: More than 100 physicians and 700 supporting staff

Integration: Meditech and ImageNow

Mercy Regional Health Center (MRHC) is an acute care facility licensed to operate 150 beds in two facilities in Manhattan, Kansas. This private, not-for-profit organization is committed to meeting its community’s healthcare needs through a quality, compassionate, modernized healthcare delivery system that includes more than 100 physicians and over 700 employees serving the people of Manhattan and the surrounding areas.

MRHC has installed several new software applications in recent years, with the goal of switching to a comprehensive electronic medical records (EMR) system. However, administrators realized that although existing applications were delivering certain benefits, there was something missing – a forms automation solution.

Patient and business-focused areas across MRHC’s two hospitals relied on paper forms, the management of which incurred high printing and delivery costs from a third party forms provider, required photocopying, manual data entry and other tasks that stifled productivity and sometimes contained illegible or inaccurate information. After a thorough market analysis, MRHC chose an Access forms management system to overcome these problems.

“We recognized that a forms automation system could deliver greater return on investment for our EMR project, and the solution from Access was the perfect fit,” says Ron Olsen, IS coordinator at MRHC. “It gives us the ability to replicate any paper form, to quickly create new forms and to customize existing forms to meet our changing needs on the fly.”

Delivering Real Return on Investment

Prior to implementing the Access system, staff in MRHC’s admissions department used three stamp plate machines to put patient information on ID cards for newly admitted and returning patients. These machines were all showing signs of wear, and replacing them would have cost \$8,000 per station. Deploying the Access solution enabled MRHC to avoid this cost, as patient registration is now managed with electronic forms.

Using the Access suite also enables MRHC to eradicate the cost of pre-printed forms for patient care. The organization used to spend a total of \$82,900 each year on forms for inpatients and outpatients, including the costs of printing and paying a forms vendor for set up and delivery. Implementing the Access solution has reduced total annual expenditure to \$46,410.

“Replacing a paper-driven forms process with the Access PFS solution saves us \$36,490 annually,” Olsen says. “The Access system also saved us \$24,000 we would have





The Business Problems

Using a third party forms vendor drives up costs

Replace costly stamp plate machines in the patient admissions department or find a more cost-effective alternative

Patient accounting personnel spend up to 20 hours a week manually processing forms

When forms specifications change, outdated forms are destroyed

The Solutions

Managing forms electronically in-house saves \$36,490 annually

The Access solution eliminated the need to spend \$24,000 on new stamping machines and works with MRHC's document imaging system to deliver a fast check-in

Automating forms processing saves the equivalent of half an FTE by minimizing tedious tasks

Printing limited quantities of forms on demand eliminates forms wastage

spent on buying new stamp plate machines and eliminated the supply overhead for this equipment. We've also eliminated costs associated with changing forms and disposing outdated forms."

In addition to saving money, Access delivers time savings in the admissions department. Now, patient forms are designed and managed using an intuitive design tool and barcodes are automatically included on them. Once the forms are completed and signed by a patient, a staff member scans them into MRHC's document management system, which uses OCR technology to automatically index the forms to the patient's record in the HIS.

There is a standard package of patient registration forms at MRHC, but not all of them are relevant for every patient. With Access, an admissions associate can look at a certain demographic, such as the patient's financial class, and just print out the forms pertaining to that patient. This accelerates the admissions process and reduces paper waste.

"Access products have eliminated manual data entry in the admissions department," Olsen says. "They work with our document management system to create a seamless solution that speeds registration, and so increases patient satisfaction."

In the patient finance area, employees print UB04 and 1500 Claim Forms to send to insurance companies. Previously, they printed duplicates that were scanned into the document management system and manually indexed. Now, the Access Image Portal automatically sends a duplicate of each form to the document management system where it is auto-indexed, eliminating the printing cost and manual processing time associated with filing hard copies.

"The patient accounts director told me that using the Access system saved half an FTE because of the manual work it eradicates"

Impacting Administrative Departments

MRHC once used a single dot matrix printer to print checks in the back office. This was a slow piece of hardware that required frequent maintenance and caused downtime headaches when it needed repair, as there was no other printer to output checks to. With the Access suite, the dot matrix printer has been retired and staff can print to a laser printer at any authorized business station, ensuring continuous operations.

At MRHC, as at most hospitals, company officers need to authorize checks over a certain dollar amount. When a check run is started, the Access PFS Server makes a logic call, identifies those checks under \$10,000 and prints them with a signature affixed. Checks for this dollar amount or more print without a signature, indicating that authorization is required.

"Access PFS allows us to perform business logic on our checks," Olsen says. "This adds a new level of efficiency."

A key to the success of any new technology deployment is early user adoption. Employees of all skill levels find it easy to use intuitive Access functionality. "Most of our end users don't know that there's a new forms management system because the link between Access and our other systems is so seamless," Olsen says.



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Using an Access solution Mercy Regional Health Center has created substantial cost savings and delivered rapid and lasting return on investment (ROI) at MRHC.

Here's an overview of the numbers:

Forms Used (Annually)

Outpatient forms used: 390,000

Inpatient forms used: 240,000

Total forms used: 630,000

Costs and Savings in Patient Care

Annual forms cost when using third-party vendor: \$82,900

Annual forms cost using the Access solution: \$46,410

Annual forms cost savings: \$36,490

Three-year forms cost savings: \$109,770

Additional Cost Savings:

Avoided \$24,000 expense of buying replacing three stamp plate machines

Eliminated half an FTE due to reduction of manual tasks

Improving Information Sharing

When using paper forms, Mercy personnel hand-delivered documents to other areas of the hospital, delaying collaboration with their colleagues. With the Access solution, forms can be printed, e-mailed, faxed or ported directly into the document management system.

“Access has definitely improved information sharing because we can send forms anywhere in the hospital, and even across town to our other facility,” Olsen says.

Previously, each time there was a regulatory change or physicians and nurses wanted to alter the layout and contents of forms, MRHC placed a new order with its forms vendor, which charged for setup, printing, stock and delivery. The old forms became obsolete and were disposed of. Access has eliminated these inefficiencies.

“If a new nursing manager wants to change forms we can do it in seconds in Access,” Olsen says. “It’s simple to delete and add details, make customizations, and basically do anything we’ll ever need to do to a form. Instead of ordering large quantities of forms and wasting some, we can print a precise amount on demand.”

Interoperability is a key factor for healthcare systems when selecting and deploying new technology. Access works in conjunction with MRHC’s HIS, document management system and other software and hardware, extending the value of the systems already in place.

“The Access product suite is a vital part of our EMR solution,” Olsen says. “It has increased patient safety and satisfaction, reduced costs and boosted productivity.”

The Access Advantage

As part of a ‘customer first’ approach, Access staff invest a lot of energy in providing comprehensive and accessible training at Access’s state-of-the-art facility. For MRHC, attending a customer education course was invaluable. “Access’s training was excellent,” Olsen says. “When we went back to work we were well equipped to build forms and do everything else we needed.”

At Access, it’s not just training, project planning and implementation that are important, but also supporting customers after deployment. “Access’s support system is wonderful, as good as it gets,” Olsen says. “My calls are answered quickly and the staff members are knowledgeable. When I make suggestions, a member of the development team calls me back and we figure out how to put my request into action. This shows me that the company is developing products that meet the real business challenges of healthcare today.”





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