

Case study

Advocate Health Center

Saving Time and Improving Patient Care



At a glance

Industry: Healthcare

Application: Patient Record Tracking

Based in Oak Brook, Illinois, Advocate Health Centers is the largest fully integrated not-for-profit health care delivery system in metropolitan Chicago and is recognized as one of the top ten systems in the country. It's an organization of more than 24,500 physicians and health care professionals dedicated to serving the health needs of individuals, families and communities.

Among its more than 200 sites of care, Advocate Health Centers has 20 centers. They're committed to listening and responding to their patients' needs, including the need for a good family physician or specialist close to home, convenient office hours, easy appointment scheduling and quality programs and services.

On average, each center sees approximately 2,000 patients per day and medical charts are required for every patient. Returning patients' charts are retrieved from the central records department at each center. Charts for new patients are created the first time they visit.

Because of the volume of patients each center sees daily, medical charts are pulled three days ahead for appointments. Add-ons, emergency care, and patients calling in to schedule an appointment that day, are added wherever a time slot exists.

Fast, Real-Time Tracking of Charts

The most critical thing in managing the medical records is knowing exactly where a chart is at any given time and making sure it's ready for the healthcare provider when they need it. Otherwise, the provider's and the patient's time is wasted while the chart is being located. Advocate Health Centers' process was to pull the chart and then manually enter each patient's medical record number into the system each step of the way. Not only was this extremely time consuming, but the margin for error was huge considering each patient's medical record number consists of up to ten digits. The simple mistake of mis-keying the number results in wrong patient information being supplied to the physician, misplaced charts, and increased waiting time for the patient. Advocate Health Centers knew they had to correct the situation, and Roxann Cook, Scheduling/Chart Tracking Analyst, stepped in to find the solution.

After carefully reviewing all of the upgrade options available and testing the equipment, Cook chose Intermec Technologies Corporation. "I went with Intermec because they were the only company that was able to provide a complete solution at the right price," said Cook. "They had printers, scanners, media, and outstanding technical support."



Another factor in the decision to use Intermec equipment was the support Cook received from Intermec Account Executive, Tony Rinaldi. "I called and said 'I've got this Intermec printer I'm working with and I've got this other equipment and I just need some labels.' And he sent them right out. He's great. Tony backs me up and I can get a hold of technical support right when I need it. That's a big reason I went with Intermec."

The Intermec Solution

She selected two of Advocate Health Centers' largest health care centers, Beverly and Evergreen, to roll out the new system. At each center, ScanPlus-Vista scanners were installed at every station in medical records and at the nursing stations – anywhere a chart needed to be checked in. An Intermec EasyCoder® 3400 was installed in the medical records departments and Intermec EasyCoder 7421 printers at each workstation. They printed to Intermec DuraTran II labels.

The 3400 printers were installed in the medical records department of the two largest centers because of the patient volume and the number of people needing to print to it. 7421 printers were used at workstations because they're compact, durable, and print labels quickly. Installation of all the equipment and associates' training takes an average of one day per center.

Zero Margin of Error

The new system has dramatically streamlined the process and reduced the margin of error to virtually zero. Appointment schedules are printed



and delivered to the medical records department daily. A code on the schedule indicates if the patient is returning or new. For returning patients, they pull the chart, scan the bar code, batch the charts by the provider, and deliver those charts to the provider's nurse. The nurse then scans each bar code to indicate it was received. As the chart moves from place to place in the center, each associate scans the bar code so at any given time the chart can be located.

For new patients, an Advocate Health Centers associate conducts a mini registration when they call and creates the chart. The IDX system prompts them to generate a medical record number, which generates the bar code number and prints the chart label.

"Our medical records staff and nurses love the new system. It's fast, accurate, and easy to use," said Cook. "Each doctor may see 30 to 40 patients a day. One person has to deal with all those charts and now they can have the charts ready in 5-10 minutes versus an hour like before."

The efficiencies and timesaving Advocate Health Centers is experiencing since rolling out the new system in the two pilot centers has significantly helped their business run better. To date, Cook has four centers live and the goal is to have all their centers rolled out by the end of next year.

"We judge our success through patient satisfaction," said Cook. "If the doctor knows where the chart is, it saves waiting time for patients. Everybody's happy."

Faster, More Precise Archiving

In the future, they'll realize additional time saving efficiencies using the Intermec equipment as they prepare charts for archiving. Advocate Health Centers is required to keep pediatric patient charts for 18 years and adult records 3 years. If there has been no activity after a period of time, the charts are purged and stored in archive.

Beverly Center, for example, archives up to 200 boxes per year, each box containing 40 to 50 charts. "Archiving charts will be a dream come true," said Cook. "No more keying in 10 digits per chart, all we have to do now is scan them into the system."

The ultimate testimony of how well the system works is that Cook has Advocate Health Centers' managers begging her to install the system in their center. "It's so important that the entire system works as good as the people working on it and Intermec was able to provide us with that system."

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