Cambridge Memorial Hospital
Patient HL7 Data Transfer to Practice Solutions EMRs

Simplifying and Securing the Transfer of Patient Information

At Cambridge Memorial Hospital (CMH) in Cambridge, Ontario, the transfer of patient information and records to the offices of its physicians could be a very inefficient process when conducted manually. Hospital staff would have to print patient information from electronic files in MEDITECH, its Health Care Information System (HCIS), which typically required using 10-40 sheets of paper per doctor per day. The staff would then sort and physically distribute the papers by going over to physicians' mailboxes at the hospital doctors' lounge and placing them in the appropriate boxes. This process created concerns that the documents might not go to the right doctor, get distributed in a timely manner, or be maintained securely.

After picking up the documents, the physician's office staff would then scan them with an OCR (optical character recognition) or type the information into their Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), which would consume 30-60 minutes of staff time per day. The likelihood that the OCR image would introduce errors in the content or that transcription errors would occur was very high, which is critical when data such as blood test results is being scanned or recorded.

As a 155-bed acute care facility serving the communities of Cambridge, North Dumfries, Doon and Deer Ridge, CMH needed a solution that would make electronic patient information in MEDITECH more readily available to physicians and transfer the information electronically to physicians' EMRs, making the patient data transfer process very simple, efficient and secure.

Reduces Costs while Increasing Patient Information Security

"Using electronic data distribution saves paper, reduces paper costs and eliminates manual handling of data, which can take hours, pose a risk to data security and patient privacy and increase inaccuracies. With NetDelivery, reports are delivered to physicians' secure hospital network folders in real-time.

Brad Smith
Clinical Applications Consultant
Cambridge Memorial Hospital

Speeding the Transfer of HL7 and Other Data Directly to EMRs

CMH, an Affiliated Teaching Site of McMaster University School of Medicine, found the electronic data transfer solution it sought in NetDelivery, Interbit Data's information distribution software. With NetDelivery, CMH can transfer patient data in electronic form directly to physicians' EMRs, which are managed by Practice Solutions Software, Canada's leading EMR software provider and Ontario's largest. Data sharing and transfer in HL7 and other formats is now quick and efficient, producing across-the-board results that help CMH raise the level of patient care.

CMH and its physicians have reduced time, costs, paper waste and the risk of error by using NetDelivery to distribute and transfer data from MEDITECH to Practice Solutions' EMRs. The hospital distributes all its Health Information Management (HIM) reports via NetDelivery, including diagnostic imaging reports, cardio-respiratory reports and

laboratory results. Lab data is distributed in the HL7 format, which is presently used by three CMH physicians, but more are scheduled to come on board as the HL7 process is further refined. Over 80 physicians are currently receiving reports electronically from NetDelivery.

Saving Staff Time and Reducing Paper Usage and Costs

With NetDelivery, the CMH hospital staff no longer needs to spend the time or use the paper required for printing and physically distributing patient information, as the data is automatically transferred to an electronic database. Gone is the concern about patient data going to the wrong doctor and the potential risk to patient privacy and information security. With NetDelivery, the hospital can easily monitor when the doctor has picked up the data.

Physicians' offices find that NetDelivery allows them to retrieve patient data online instead of sending a staff member to the hospital to pick it up. The data is available instantaneously and can be retrieved at any time during the day. Practice Solutions sends an email alert when there are updates in patients' reports.

"Using electronic data distribution saves paper, reduces paper costs and eliminates manual handling of data, which can take hours, pose a risk to data security and patient privacy and increase inaccuracies," states Brad Smith, clinical applications consultant at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. "With NetDelivery, reports are delivered to physicians' secure hospital network folders in real-time. All they need to do is go to the secure portal connecting them to the hospital, find their network folder and click and drag their patient's file to their hard drive and their Practice Solutions EMR. Only one clerical person in the physician's office would need to logon each morning to retrieve all of the physician's patient reports and drag them to the EMR."

With NetDelivery, electronic reports can be delivered in the HL7 format or in text or PDF files. NetDelivery transfers the HL7 lab test data to the Practice Solutions EMR via its Integration Module, which securely and reliably reformats data into HL7 messages, protecting the integrity of this critical data. CMH also uses NetDelivery for distributing financial reports to department managers by email or dropped into Windows folders

"Now that physicians' offices no longer have to enter and scan data and documents, transcription and scanning errors are eliminated," states Dr. James Kavanagh, a CMH physician and medical director at Practice Solutions Software. "NetDelivery is a morale saver as well as a money saver because our staff no longer needs to spend time scanning for errors. We have also cut down on the number of calls to the hospital for verbal reports on lab tests because we can now view lab results electronically."

"Having information computerized provides ease and convenience that ultimately benefits patient care," adds Kavanagh. "For example, we can graph lab test results received via HL7 to compare and assess trends. If a physician is following patients with a chronic condition such as diabetes, monitoring lab results electronically allows them to see which patients are not on track and where they need to focus their energies and target care."NetDelivery's value to both the hospital and physicians leads to positive effects for the patient," concludes Kavanagh.

Smith's final comment: "We love NetDelivery. It's terrific."

Canadian Adoption of Healthcare Data Interoperability

Roughly 10-15% of healthcare providers in Canada are using an entirely electronic medical record for all their patients. Organizations such as CanadaHealthInfoWay are driving initiatives to broaden the adoption of electronic healthcare data with the goal of improving the overall quality of healthcare. Canada provides government funding for qualified physicians who implement EMRs with a qualified vendor. Practice Solutions, a subsidiary of the Canadian Medical Association, is certified as a funding eligible clinical management system (CMS) by OntarioMD.

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