



Case Study: Mary Washington Hospital

Fredericksburg, Virginia



“Our goal was to eventually eliminate paper in our department. We knew the 3M products would work together to make our coding, abstracting, and chart management processes much more efficient and accurate.”

— Evelyn Bickley, HIM director, Mary Washington Hospital

Proven results

- Records scanned in 12 hours and available online to coders, physicians, and key staff
- Streamlined HIM workflow, improving productivity enough to reduce FTEs by nine percent
- Eliminated costs associated with offsite storage of paper records and reduced supply costs

3M products used by Mary Washington Hospital

- 3M™ ChartScan™ Software
- 3M™ ChartView™ Software
- 3M™ Electronic Signature Authentication (ESA) Software
- 3M™ ChartScript™ Software
- 3M™ Coding and Reimbursement System
- 3M™ ChartRelease™ Software
- 3M™ ChartFact™ Software
- 3M™ ClinTrac™ Clinical Abstracting Software
- 3M™ ChartID™ Software
- 3M™ ProviderID Software

Snapshot: Mary Washington Hospital

Type of facility: Mary Washington Hospital is a full-service hospital based in Fredericksburg, Virginia. It is the flagship facility of the Medicorp Health System, a nonprofit regional network of healthcare facilities and wellness services.

Number of beds: 420 with plans for expansion into a new acute care facility.

Services: A broad range of specialties and services, including acute care, behavioral care, birth center, cardiology, emergency, oncology, palliative care, radiology, surgery and a sleep center.

The challenge

Mary Washington Hospital, a busy acute-care hospital serving Northern Virginia, was undergoing a significant expansion of its services, when Evelyn Bickley, the hospital’s health information management (HIM) director, received a mandate to improve efficiency and reduce costs in her department.

An outdated paper-based system had created roadblocks in the flow of patient data and staff attempts to keep up resulted in higher than acceptable error rates. Requests for files could take up to one week to fill, and delays in processing paper charts meant growing coding backlogs, longer A/R days, and more back-end rework when claims were denied.

In addition, the hospital was renting off-site space to store thousands of paper files. A full-time staff person was needed simply to transfer files to and from the hospital each day, since the HIM department was located in a separate building.



Mary Washington Hospital

A process and system overhaul was certainly needed, and timing was crucial, because the organization was adding two new facilities: a 40-bed behavioral unit and a 100-bed acute care hospital. The HIM department needed to find a way to bring records under control in an environment of rapid growth.

After evaluating a number of options on the market, Mary Washington selected 3M's suite of document management applications, including 3M™ ChartScan™, 3M™ ChartView™, and 3M™ Electronic Signature Authentication (ESA) Software, for their comprehensive features and ability to integrate with the 3M™ Coding and Reimbursement System and 3M™ ClinTrac™ Abstracting Software already in place at the hospital. "Our goal was to eventually eliminate paper in our department," says Bickley. "We knew the 3M products would work together to make our coding, abstracting, and chart management processes much more efficient and accurate."

The approach

In the planning stage, HIM staff presented the new program at medical staff and departmental meetings for months leading up to implementation. Hospital staff participated in hands-on software demonstrations to understand the impact on day-to-day workflow. In the process, HIM identified what would be of particular importance to various constituencies and shaped the plan to reflect the needs of key stakeholders. "It was very interdisciplinary, including involvement of nursing leadership, which was essential," says Bickley.

Within six months of going live with ER records, Mary Washington had all areas live and operational immediately afterwards. "I initially anticipated needing six additional staff people just to implement the new system," notes Bickley. "But staff acceptance made the changeover happen much faster than we expected. We pretty much lock the file room door and rarely access the records. That's how quickly they switched to the new process."

The results

The move from a manual paper-based system to an electronic one has had a significant impact on efficiency. With 3M ChartScan and 3M ESA software applications in place, the hospital has shortened the timeframe for processing discharge records from five days or longer to under 12 hours. "It's a huge time-savings," notes Bickley. "Previously, we could never keep up with the manual paperwork and the analysis. Coders would be looking for charts we didn't even have assembled yet."



Health Information Systems

575 West Murray Boulevard
Salt Lake City, UT 84123
U.S.A.
800 367 2447
www.3Mhis.com

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In fact, efficiency was so improved that once the backlog of current files was under control, staff had time to go back and scan archived records into the new system. Within a year, all patient records were available either electronically or on microfilm housed onsite, eliminating the need and expense of offsite file storage. In fact, the HIM department has been able to streamline processes enough to reduce the number of full-time HIM employees by nine percent.

Bickley has also seen the accuracy of her staff's work improve beyond expectations. Before the transition to the 3M applications, it was difficult to track errors, so quality control was a haphazard process. "Errors would be identified with the old paper system, but there was no way to determine accountability," Bickley says. Today, staff responsible for document processing receives feedback on a weekly basis, providing consistent, high quality results.

Productivity has risen sharply with the move to an electronic patient record. The integration of the 3M chart management applications with 3M coding and abstracting software has enabled easy access to the record, making it possible to assign seven coders to work from home. "The opportunity to use remote coders means we can be very selective in hiring," Bickley reports. "We can attract experienced coders from all regions of the state."

Physicians and staff are also realizing the benefits of remote access. With the 3M ChartView interface, clinicians can instantly access patient charts from the past two years from any facility within the MediCorp health system or offsite if necessary. "We're now planning to roll out the system to our physician practices, so that all of our physicians have access," says Bickley.

While the move to an electronic patient record required careful planning and active support from key departments, most staff members adjusted to the new paperless environment, and a year later, wonder how work was accomplished before the transition. "I think the impact outside our department has been even greater than we anticipated," Bickley comments. Software tools all working together have enabled a quantum shift in work processes and efficiency at key points along the patient data stream.

"I call it one-stop shopping, the integration of images with coding and abstracting," adds Bickley. "There's no going out to another application, it's all right here. And that just makes it so easy."

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Published 10/08
70-2009-9007-8