



Black River Falls Memorial Hospital Optimizes Patient Care by Going Paperless

SUCCESS STORY

Since 1995, Healthland has been a solutions provider for Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH), a 25-bed critical access hospital and accredited primary health care facility in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, that serves Jackson County, population 19,000.

BRMH is forward thinking and aggressive in its pursuit of excellent care. The hospital employs approximately 300 staff and contract workers and provides a broad range of services, including serving as the region's supplier of dialysis. They are committed to the educational aspects of medicine and participate in the preceptorship program of the University of Wisconsin Medical School, which gives fourth-year medical students the opportunity to train in a rural setting.

The hospital has a longstanding relationship and shares a medical staff with the Krohn Clinic, an independent, for-profit clinic located across the street from BRMH. BRMH also has ties with the Ho-Chunk Clinic, a one-physician facility dedicated to serving the area's Native American population.

Background

BRMH began using Healthland financial applications in 1995. A few years later, they were the first beta users of our clinical application and one of our first customers to go live with OMAR. In both instances, they had significant input into later versions.

But despite having almost all of our clinical applications, BRMH was still creating the majority of documents by hand, in part because it was easy for the staff, and because there weren't enough computers to go around. Then, in 2005, as BRMH was making final plans for a building/remodeling project, they did a cost comparison to see how much square footage would be required to house medical records in the new facility versus scanning and making documents available electronically.

BRMH recognized that a paperless environment would result in many benefits, including:

- :: Enabling them to deliver an even higher level of patient care
- :: Saving on building/remodeling costs
- :: Optimizing existing technology
- :: Creating operational efficiencies

As a first step, they decided to make the transition to electronic medical records (EMR) and asked Healthland to partner with them. "We were ready to move forward technologically," says BRMH's CFO, Bob Daley. "Going paperless was our way of saying yes, we're a small rural hospital, but we're as good or better than larger urban hospitals. Healthland has long provided us with a sound information structure and is committed to helping us meet new goals, so we couldn't imagine doing this with anyone else." This partnership also had special significance for Healthland: BRMH was its first customer to make the transition from a paper environment to one that is paperless.

Process

Scanning

A Healthland representative worked with BRMH to evaluate the best approach for scanning medical records. The decision was made to outsource. Healthland worked with a vendor in Milwaukee to write an interface to scan and upload records into the hospital's system, a process that took about three months. The beta version of our scanning software was used. Once back-up of scanned documents was verified, paper records were destroyed. The hospital also bought a scanner to import documents that still must be created manually.

Automation of forms

BRMH automated the majority of their forms using Healthland's Clinical Documentation module, all of which can be signed electronically. Some forms cannot be automated in real-time for logistical reasons. For example, certain environments aren't amenable to laptops, necessitating that documents be created on paper. In these situations, BRMH scans documents, verifies back-up, then shreds the documents.

Electronic dictation

Physicians were taught how to do electronic dictation. A physician sees a patient, goes to a computer workstation and dictates notes, which are then transcribed and made available via EMR. Physician orders are the one exception to this process: they are still handwritten and given to health unit coordinators. However, orders are transcribed into the system almost immediately.

Bar-coding

During the past 12 months, BRMH has added a significant safety measure available through our pharmacy package: bar code scanning of all medications in obstetrics and medical/surgical departments. Patients also wear a wristband with a bar code, which is matched to the bar code on the prescription when meds are administered. Wireless barcode readers are used for this process.

Transfer of data between departments and the local clinic

Because the financial and clinical modules are integrated, processes between all departments are streamlined. Patients are registered on the financial side and that information is made available on the clinical side. This helps eliminate errors and the need to find and/or hand-carry reports to various departments, and ensures ready access to current information.

An underground cable was run between the hospital and the Krohn Clinic; the clinic purchased computers and the entire Healthland system, allowing them to access the majority of the hospital's medical records. BRMH is now setting up a link from the clinic's records to theirs so the transfer of information is two-way. The physician from the Ho-Chunk Clinic can access the EMR when he's at BRMH or remotely from his office.

Ready access

The EMR is now a core component of the hospital's integrated software solution and is available hospital-wide. Users access it through banks of computer workstations and portable means, including seven mobile carts with mounted laptops and three WIN terms.

Key Obstacles & Solutions

Recognizing that broad adoption of EMR was a make or break issue, the hospital and Healthland took a hands-on approach.

The hospital's IT manager (a nurse and longtime super-user) and the manager of health information spent time on med/surg each morning for several months, educating healthcare providers on the new system. Physicians, including those from the Krohn and Ho-Chunk Clinics, also received one-on-one training.

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* BRMH has seven mobile carts with mounted laptops, enabling healthcare providers to input and access patient data at bedside.

** Banks of computer stations located throughout BRMH give healthcare providers immediate access to aggregated patient information.

Healthland was onsite at key intervals throughout this process:

- * We identified and trained super-users from each department, who then worked closely with less tech-savvy colleagues.
- * We encouraged setting up a computer lab on the medical/surgical floor so staff could learn to use the computer when it fit into their schedules.
- * We also encouraged making computer games like Solitaire available to help make learning fun.

BRMH continues to offer employees interest-free loans for the purchase of home computers. Employees are also compensated for attending computer-training courses at the local technical college.

The result of these efforts was a high adoption rate across the board. Even the most reluctant of users now wouldn't go back to the old way of doing things. "Every decision BRMH makes, including the technology we use, is driven first and foremost by what's best for the patient," says IT Manager, Darin Oakes. "Because of Healthland's solutions, providers and staff can now access patient information quickly and from a single source, creating efficiencies and optimizing care hospital-wide."

Cost & Benefits

The cost of conversion was approximately \$125,000, which covered scanning equipment, hardware, software and vendor fees to scan in over a million images. BRMH already had most of Healthland's clinical suite, so only a minimal investment in software was required. Because of the hospital's critical-access designation, approximately 45 percent of the conversion costs were reimbursed through Medicare.

No metrics have been established yet to measure ROI, but there is no doubt that EMR has enhanced efficiency. To cite but one example, EMR streamlined efforts to such a degree in the health information management department that it freed them from having to add two full-time employees.

No doubt that EMR adds patient safety features, including:

- * Illegible hand-written notes have been eliminated
- * Scanned medications are double-checked before administration
- * Patient allergies are flagged and a warning screen appears if a medication has been ordered that the patient is allergic to
- * Patient information is instantly available even in situations when the patient is physically unable to provide this information

Intangible benefits are also significant in terms of their impact on patient care:

- * Instant access to aggregated patient data enhances efficiency, teamwork, and the ability to deliver quality care
- * May reduce risk of medical errors
- * Enhances efficiencies and reduces operational costs
- * Facilitates HIPAA compliance
- * Reduces billing errors and improves cash-flow for the hospital
- * Reduces paper
- * Improves departmental and organizational communication

Evaluation

BRMH is now approximately 75 percent paperless. The lab and respiratory care are 100 percent up and med/surg is 85 percent up. The emergency department and surgery are assessing the types of online documentation that are realistic to do in real time.

There is little doubt that BRMH is ahead of the curve among rural hospitals in its use of technology. In fact, in a recent survey of technology adoption at rural hospitals in Wisconsin, BRMH met almost all of the 30 established criteria; most of the other hospitals met few or none.

Future plans include establishing on-site medical kiosks for patient and family use. Also, as part of the hospital's expansion/remodeling project, a computer or thin client will be part of every patient room for use by medical staff.

Healthland continues to provide consulting services, installation of and training on software modules depending on need (including WebEx training sessions), and 24/7 support for all Healthland software solutions. When appropriate, we also share insights gleaned from our work with other facilities.

Healthland is now developing software that addresses the needs of departments that don't lend themselves to online documentation in real-time, such as the ER. "Healthland has been instrumental in helping us achieve our objectives over the years," states Daley. "Suffice it to say we've made an investment in and are committed to working with them as they move forward with new products and services."



If they can do it, you can too. To learn more about our products and services and how Healthland can help your hospital become paperless, contact us at info@healthland.com or 800.323.6987.

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