

Achieving the Improbable: Port Huron Hospital Implements EMR in 12 Months

Port Huron Hospital, located in Port Huron, Michigan, was at a crossroads. The 186-bed facility with four community health centers was focused on meeting Meaningful Use Stage 2 following one of two options. They could continue using the system they used to achieve Meaningful Use Stage 1 but was proving unstable. Or they could move forward with a new EMR system. The catch? They would have 12 months to select, implement, and go LIVE with the new system. Industry research had revealed that the usual timeframe for a full conversion to a new EMR of this size typically takes 18 to 24 months.



After a thorough selection process that included both staff and management, the organization chose MEDITECH as their new hospital information system vendor. MEDITECH and CareTech Solutions worked collaboratively in developing a number of Best Practices for Port Huron to adhere to:

- Utilize the MEDITECH READY build process that provides a partially built and configured application
- Engage an overall project manager to coordinate the various schedules, resources, and activities of vendors, consultants, and staff
- Limit the number of customizations and add-ons to the build
- Obtain a commitment from PHH management to ensure the proper resources were available when needed.

Strategies and Goals of the EMR Implementation

The swift 12 month undertaking required a total team effort. The project management team laid the foundation by defining the project's scope, complete with clear resource roles and assignments. The system would be constantly tested and refined. There was a comprehensive communication plan aimed all levels of staff that would include weekly reports and monthly executive updates. The project was divided into three phases:

Phase 1: Complete data redundancy for disaster recovery

Phase 2: Daily incremental transfer of newly created data in the still-active old system

Phase 3: LIVE launch of the new EMR system and CareTech's iDoc Archive, a legacy decommissioning system used to extract and normalize data for future migration to MEDITECH

To ensure their investment reaped the desired benefits, PHH used the Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements, as well as the 2014 quality core measurement requirements, to establish measurable objectives for the project. These goals included the following:

- CPOE adoption rates
- Medication reconciliation thresholds
- Use of alerts and reminders
- The capturing and communicating of critical patient information.





Overcoming Challenges and Barriers

Like any EMR implementation, there were risks and challenges that were regularly monitored. Some challenges addressed were:

- The hospital feared that valuable data could be lost due to their outdated server, so CareTech's iDoc Archive legacy decommissioning system was used to extract and normalize data for future migration to MEDITECH. The system's functionality and ease of use enabled the first users to be trained within an hour. This would prove invaluable when the old server failed. Foresight was also realized when the hospital was sold during the project and the contingency fund was used to bring in MEDITECH specialists to work with the staff on implementation.
- Physician engagement was minimal at the beginning of the implementation. Dr. Sara Liter-Kuester, PHH's chief medical information officer, coordinated all the physician issues and also hired appropriate physician consultants throughout the implementation in order to engage the physicians.
- Port Huron Hospital was seeking a return on their investment by optimizing the use of resources and reducing operational costs in the form of transcriptions and supplies. The organization's budget limited their ability hire new staff, therefore the most efficient use of their current staff was of most importance.

Key Project Successes

Thanks to the teamwork of all involved, the conversion process was completed in time to meet Meaningful Use requirements. In addition, there were a number of additional outcomes achieved:

- Over 2.3 million records were transferred.
- The hospital realized its CPOE goals as usage went from over 30% to 88% as soon as the system with LIVE.
- The amount of re-orders went down to almost nothing.
- Dragon voice-recognition system was successfully expanded from the Emergency Department to the entire hospital.
- \$500,000 in system support costs were eliminated
- The goal of reducing paper reports to a minimum by utilizing real time and on-line queries resulted in the elimination of over 2,000 paper reports.
- The number of calls to the help desk during the first week after go-live went to half of normal: 380 the first day, then half of that the next day. During that weekend they continued to go down.