



ALLSCRIPTS™
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CASE STUDY

Columbia Memorial Hospital Hudson, NY

HealthMatics® ED

BACKGROUND

Columbia Memorial Hospital is a 192-bed acute care facility serving more than 100,000 residents in three New York state counties. The hospital focuses on advanced surgery, primary care and health-based education. It also operates a 120-bed long-term care site, along with numerous outlying primary care centers and outpatient specialties centers. Its recent \$20 million investment in new facilities and equipment included a state-of-the-art emergency department that provides valuable public health information to local authorities in addition to serving patients.

OPPORTUNITY

New ED facility stretches resources to the limit

Dr. Norm Chapin, Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine, says that the department's recent expansion severely tested the department's resources. "We had more room and were handling many more patients each day, but were so spread out that the staff were suddenly finding it harder and harder to communicate with each other. It was extremely difficult to keep track of what was going on in the waiting room—in fact, at one point there were only two staff members who consistently had an up-to-the minute count of who was there and what exactly they needed."

He adds that charts were often difficult to locate, physician documentation was sometimes undependable, and excessive delays were common during a typical patient visit. "A patient's chart was passed from hand to hand in a very linear fashion as each staff member viewed information, ordered tests, added information, and so forth. While this was happening, the patient was just sitting around waiting." In addition, hospital staff often faced an "information vacuum" resulting from a lack of easily accessible data about what had happened to a patient in the ED just before being admitted.

Administrative effectiveness was also an issue. "Without a clear, well-documented view of how the department was functioning, it was much harder to accurately identify and address problems," says Dr. Chapin. "It was clear that we needed to find a way to work more efficiently, improve access to patient data, and improve our ability to consistently allocate ED resources effectively."

SOLUTION

Solid technology and complete, targeted functionality

According to Dr. Chapin, the hospital had three very clear objectives when searching for an electronic system to replace their paper-based methodologies. "For one thing, the system had to have all the functionality we required, immediately—no waiting for



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Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

- ▶ 192 beds/acute care
- ▶ 120 beds/long term care
- ▶ 100,000 patients
- ▶ 31,700 ED visits annually
- ▶ Numerous affiliated primary care centers
- ▶ Several outpatient specialties centers



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future developments," he said. "Secondly, it had to produce actual sites where the electronic ED solution had been interfaced effectively with hospital databases similar to ours. And finally, the company itself had to be a well-established enterprise with proven technology and clear staying power." He explains that HealthMatics ED was the only solution that met all three criteria. "HealthMatics ED had all the clinical, IT and financial strengths we were looking for," he says.

Once selected, HealthMatics ED also offered an efficient implementation process that resulted in an excellent ongoing working relationship between the hospital and Allscripts. "The Allscripts team guided us through the workflow analysis and project timeline very well," he says. "And by the go-live date, we were all on a first-name basis. The team's accessibility made the transition much easier."

RESULTS

Faster triage, reduced length of stay

According to Dr. Chapin, the new HealthMatics ED system has improved operational efficiency by 50%, shaving as much as two hours off a typical patient visit. He cites HealthMatics ED's powerful tracking board and easy-to-spot color-coded icons as major contributors to the surge in productivity. "Everything's right there for everyone to see, so that we're all in the loop continuously," he says. "It makes it much easier for the triage nurse to communicate with physicians about urgent cases, identify and tag chief complaints, and assign acuity levels to everyone who comes into the ED for treatment. We can fast track when necessary, and keep the overall process moving so we can respond to all patients in a timely manner."

He adds that time and stress have also been substantially reduced for lab orders, x-rays and medications. "When a physician orders an x-ray or lab through the HealthMatics ED system, it prints out automatically at the appropriate technician's station—no phone calls or pages. The technician simply shows up at the patient's bedside and completes the work as needed. In fact, it's very typical for a physician to order tests or medications at the patient's bedside, and have everything done by the time they start their next evaluation, five minutes later. We don't have to run around looking for people to get something done—it just happens."

The built-in prescription writer and automatic prescription printout have also contributed to heightened efficiency. Patients receive prescriptions very quickly, and ED staff no longer have worry about the security concerns associated with conventional prescription pads.

Higher coding levels, easier access to full documentation

The HealthMatics ED system has significantly improved the accuracy of documentation, providing physicians with an easier way to enter complete, detailed notes about treatment into a patient's chart. It also ensures that information remains fully available for later retrieval. As a result, patient care in the ED can be coded at consistently higher levels, improving overall revenues and reducing denial rates. The system has also reduced paper-related costs by about \$120,000 annually.

Dr. Chapin points out that information can now be shared more quickly among physicians, staff, and administrators, enhancing the quality and speed of patient care.

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An added benefit is that the system prints out comprehensive discharge notes that patients can take with them when leaving.

The IT staff are also pleased that the system integrates well with the hospital's primary MEDITECH database. All information entered into HealthMatics ED is transmitted automatically to MEDITECH for easy access by any authorized user in the hospital or at affiliated healthcare sites. An additional interface in the opposite direction permits ED staff to access the hospital's in-patient records whenever necessary.

The system has also had broader implications for the community at large. With extensive information on ED activity, including specific patient complaints, treatments and outcomes, it has been drafted into use as a preparedness tool to help track public health information and identify public health emergencies.

Quick response to administrative challenges

Dr. Chapin adds that HealthMatics ED's has significantly enhanced his ability to view, analyze and address problems and inefficiencies that develop in ED processes. He can more easily pinpoint the source of problems, respond to complaints, and re-allocate resources in an intelligent, rapid manner. "HealthMatics ED has saved me more administrative hours than I can count," he says. "In fact, by vastly simplifying data access and order entry, it has revolutionized the way we do everything in the department. HealthMatics ED improves the patient experience and makes all of our jobs a lot easier."

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