

AWD[®] Case Study

Sisters of Mercy Health System – St. John's Mercy Health Care

Business Environment

Healthcare providers today are under tremendous pressure to increase their efficiency and quality of service, while addressing increased regulations and combating the rising cost of operations. Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) is no exception.

St. Louis-based Mercy is a large system of hospitals, physician practices, health plans, and health and human services, supporting a seven-state area. Mercy decentralizes its operations with regional Strategic Service Units, which have the benefits of local management and Mercy's system strength. One of these units is St. John's Mercy Health Care in St. Louis.

In St. John's quest to care for Priority No. 1 – the patients – challenges such as managing medical records and the billing process bogged down their revenue cycle.

“We identified three main business areas related to the revenue cycle with immediate opportunities for process improvements: Admissions and Registration, Health Information Services, and the Central Business Office,” said Sheri Beekman, executive director of Receivables & Health Information Systems at St. John's.

Beekman said there were several challenges related to paper-based processing within those business areas, including:

- Managing loose sheets in the medical records
- Storage space constraints in Health Information Services
- Out-of-date archiving system in the Central Business Office
- Need to improve storage and coding for outpatient records
- Need to scan and capture patient information at the point of admission (insurance cards, advanced beneficiary notice forms, consent-to-treat forms, etc.)

Solution

St. John's researched imaging vendors but found that the Automated Work Distributor™ (AWD®) from DST Technologies, Inc., went beyond imaging to include significant opportunities for business process management (BPM), including process automation, integrated tools for quality control, and real-time business intelligence for reporting and performance analysis.

Fast FAQs

Challenge

To increase efficiency and quality of service while addressing increased regulatory requirements and reducing operational costs

Solution

AWD 3.0

Benefits

- Reduced paper processing eliminates lost or mis-filed documents
- Immediate, simultaneous access to imaged medical records
- Documented audit trails and security features
- Improved medical record processing means shorter revenue cycle

“With AWD, we can reduce the time-consuming paper shuffling among the business offices and improve our revenue cycle from start to finish. All of these benefits add up to the most important thing – more time to focus on our patients.”

Fred Ford, vice president
Sisters of Mercy Health System



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Another key factor in St. John's choice was AWD's production-proven track record. "One major differentiator setting AWD and DST apart from the competition is their first-hand experience with their own solutions," said Fred Ford, vice president for special corporate activities at Mercy. "With a visit to DST's headquarters, we saw AWD at work in their own financial services operations. To us, this demonstrated their commitment to the product and the versatility of the technology."

Representatives from Mercy, St. John's, and DST partnered to implement AWD in a way that would meet healthcare's unique challenges. Goals included the implementation of a paperless, automated work delivery system to process medical records more efficiently and provide:

- Immediate access to imaged information
- Improved utilization of resources
- Ability to print, e-mail, and fax images directly from a workstation
- Systematic quality assurance capabilities
- Documented audit trail and security features to comply with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) regulations
- Report writing capabilities to monitor work status and measure staff performance
- Reduced revenue cycle

"AWD integrated with our existing technology and processes, so there was no major reengineering," Beekman said. "We were able to leverage our existing technology investments, with AWD as the bridge connecting the various application systems throughout the St. John's organization."

AWD captures inbound medical records scanned into the system and stores them in a central information repository. Using St. John's business rules and requirements, AWD automatically delivers work to appropriate staff and physicians through the billing process.

Authorized staff and physicians across the organization have immediate access to medical records in AWD, rather than having to search for and sift through paper files to resolve questions and issues – and complete the billing cycle. AWD also assists with HIPAA compliance by tightening information security, allowing only designated individuals to view information, and by providing an audit trail to track access to records as they progress through processing.

Results

St. John's began production use of AWD in late 2002 and is continuing to implement their AWD solution across the

organization. Benefits that St. John's has identified within each of their phase-one business areas include:

Admissions and Registration

With the ability to scan and capture at the point of service, staff has immediate access to admissions information, and management has the ability to perform thorough quality assurance on the data collected. This significantly improves denial management process by ensuring that correct and complete data is utilized downstream for submitting insurance claims.

Admissions and Registration receives bed requests by phone and fax, which are automatically imported into AWD as images. This expedites the fulfillment process, streamlining communication among various departments.

Health Information Services

AWD eliminates time-consuming filing, retrieval, re-filing, and manual distribution of medical records, as staff has simultaneous access to imaged records and documents in AWD's central information repository. AWD also automatically matches loose sheets to charts reducing mis-filed, unavailable, or lost documents.

To manage and monitor chart deficiencies, AWD automatically routes medical records for chart analysis, coding, and electronic physician sign-off. AWD also automates correspondence requests for medical records, allowing St. John's to easily track these requests and accurately bill for them.

Central Business Office

AWD improves the denial management process with automated creation and routing of failed claims reports and partial payments or denials. Staff also has immediate access to imaged documents housed in AWD's central information repository (medical claims, payer/patient correspondence, admission information, etc.).

St. John's plans to expand the solution into administrative areas such as Cash Posting, Care Coordination, Contracting, Legal, Human Resources, and Accounts Payable. "AWD is a solution that Mercy and St. John's can grow with," said Ford. "With AWD, we can reduce the time-consuming paper shuffling among the business offices and improve our revenue cycle from start to finish. All of these benefits add up to the most important thing – more time to focus on our patients."

For more information on Mercy and St. John's, visit www.smhs.com. For more information on AWD solutions, please call (888) DST-INFO, e-mail awdinfo@dstsystems.com, or visit www.awdbpm.com.

