Policies and Procedures Get a Clean Bill of Health with Xerox

"Everybody needs to be operating off the same policies and procedures where patient care is concerned. That's why we chose Content Management Solutions from Xerox."

University of Missouri Health Care is a network of five hospitals and 30 clinics that provides expert patient care to over 60% of Missouri's rural population. At the center is University Hospital in Columbia, an academic medical center that excels both in medical research and in the training of future health care professionals.

University Hospital is a pioneer in technology as well, having recently invested almost $50 million to replace its legacy IT systems with more efficient and integrated models. "We're now among the leaders in the industry in terms of automated systems," says Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Coordinator and former IT Manager Mike Lynch. "And we're helping to lead the charge on new procedures and new ways of caring for people."

The Content Management Challenge

Like all major medical centers, MU Health Care was struggling between tighter budgets due to federal cutbacks and more stringent regulations following the HIPAA healthcare reform of 1996. "Like all healthcare institutions, we are responsible to 38 federal agencies," says Lynch. "It's a tremendous regulatory and oversight burden."

Policies and procedures at MU Health Care were constantly changing due to compliance and administrative issues and legal requirements; institution-wide uniformity seemed impossible. "Whenever a change was made, it was sent to over 200 people, and we expected them to add the new policies to their manual and take the old policy out," Lynch reports. "In my research, I found that no two policy manuals were exactly the same, which left us wide open to liability."

Besides legal liability, non-compliance to new HIPAA standards could lead to $250,000-a-year fines, jail time, or the complete shut down of an institution.

The Xerox Content Management Solution

Lynch needed a robust yet inexpensive content management system that would allow the institutional HIPAA task force and its sub-committees - nearly 90 people in all - to access, amend and track hundreds of policies and procedures on an ongoing basis. He found his remedy in DocuShare - Xerox Document Repository Software, a user-managed, web-based Xerox Content Management Solution.

"Xerox had the most cost-effective solution," says Lynch, who had used DocuShare to prepare for and manage the Y2K transition. DocuShare is an easily accessed online repository for content management, using Internet technology to ease the flow of information. DocuShare includes a Version Control feature that automatically updates and posts the latest version of a document and archives up to 999 previous versions. Its Subscription feature automatically notifies appropriate workgroup members when something new has been posted to DocuShare, including a one-click link to the new document.

According to Lynch, "DocuShare is a lot more flexible than a website, and we could afford to buy licensing for virtually everybody who needed to use it."

University of Missouri Health Care Benefits

"I thought it would take a year to 18 months to get our policies in compliance with HIPAA regulations," Mike Lynch admits. "But with DocuShare, we may have cut a full year off the process, as we plan to complete this project in six months, by January 2002."

Managers and supervisors now have password-protected access to policies and procedures online, and can always be assured of having the most up-to-date and accurate versions. "Soon we won't send any paper updates. We'll send e-mails with an embedded link to our DocuShare site," he reports.

Meanwhile hospital lawyers rest assured that they can easily access exact materials that were in effect for any given date. "For us it's a life-saver," says Lynch, "because we can go back and say, 'We followed exactly the policy we had in place at that time.' DocuShare helps us do that by maintaining the previous versions all policies and procedures, and doing it seamlessly."

In the future, all modified and new policies will be accessible to committee members in a new, separate index in DocuShare where

they can be previewed, exchanged and modified. DocuShare is not only a central repository for HIPAA documents, but also a powerful collaborative tool for dynamically building documents with greater ease, speed and control.

Mike Lynch evisions other vital uses for DocuShare within University Health Care like patient education, technical documentation and forms. "We look to Xerox to continue to provide cost-effective solutions for us in the future." In today's demanding healthcare environment, Xerox takes that responsibility seriously.

For more information on DocuShare and to download a free trial, visit docushare.xerox.com

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