Document Locator®

Case Study > Sound Mental Health

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> **Dian Wells,**
> **IT Director**
> **Sound Mental Health**

Streamlining access to patient information

The advent of electronic medical records (EMR) stands among the most significant innovations in modern healthcare. Computerized patient data improves healthcare efficiency and quality. However, even the most sophisticated electronic medical databases face one inescapable challenge: residual streams of paper documents.

Sound Mental Health, one of the largest mental health and chemical dependency providers in Washington State, has taken an innovative approach in solving this vexing issue in healthcare information management. They have established a system to effectively imbed the unavoidable paper-based patient documents in an all-electronic system for healthcare records management.

Known locally as SMH, Sound Mental Health is an award-winning private non-profit provider of mental health services. Their innovative, responsive approach to mental health encompasses more than 40 programs that serve thousands of men, women and children in the King County region of Seattle. Their programs include: housing services; military and veteran's programs; criminal justice and re-entry services; employment programs; chemical dependency programs, developmentally disabled services; middle school support programs; grief and loss counseling; therapeutic and foster care services; individual, group and family counseling; programs for the deaf, and more.

The last remaining streams of paper

In operation since 1966, many things in healthcare information management have evolved at SMH over the years. The implementation PsychConsult® brought a sophisticated electronic medical records system. However, despite the electronic revolution, SMH remained saddled by a steady stream of paper-based, patient-related documents. Incoming paper from the outside, and files generated internally by legacy processes, inexorably congested healthcare operations.

The Health Information Technology team at SMH, headed by IT Director Dian Wells and including Information Analyst Kelly Robinson identified the problem. More than just a scanning dilemma, they knew that the issue of incorporating

Customer: Sound Mental Health
Industry: Healthcare
Website: www.smh.org

Critical Issue
How to effectively capture and convert the last remaining streams of paper-based patient documents and turn activities into efficient digital processes.

Solution
An electronic document management system that automates notifications and workflow procedures while allowing healthcare professionals convenient access to information via the EMR system.

Result
Instant access to patient-related documents by healthcare professionals, and immediate routing and notifications of important patient files, allows healthcare decisions to be made with greater speed.

Software and Services
Document Locator
ScanStation

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paper into a digital flow encompassed everything from searchability to security. To be effective, they also knew that the digitized paper documents had to be accurately associated with their corresponding records in the EMR system - the patients' data records.

With confidentiality of patient medical information falling under the strict requirements of HIPAA compliance (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), security was a paramount concern as well. A solution that unified security across systems was recognized as ideal.

"At issue are important concerns addressed by technology that can have a positive impact on quality of care, and ColumbiaSoft's document control software has made a difference at Sound Mental Health," said Dian Wells. "How quickly a doctor has access to all the information he or she needs to make sound treatment decisions; How much administrative time is liberated and made available for additional patient care; How fast critical healthcare information is routed to the professionals who need it; these are all areas where ColumbiaSoft's Document Locator has had a positive impact."

EMR and electronic document management

By combining the essential components of a platform built for managing electronic documents found in the Document Locator system, with a system designed for patient care, clinical administration, and billing found in PsychConsult, SMH's technology team has developed an innovative and cost-effective approach built on industry-standard software.

"The practical outcome of bringing Document Locator to Sound Mental Health is that the last remaining streams

of patient-related paper files, everything from legal files, to court documents, to lab results, are now digitized," said Kelly Robinson. "The implementation of an all-electronic approach for patient records is saving doctors' time and improving the quality of care."

One example of how time is saved using Document Locator is with the internal routing of patient lab work results. As lab results are received from outside medical laboratories, the paper files are now immediately converted to digital. Electronic workflow notifies healthcare professionals via email. The process replaces a paper-based mailbox routing method that often took hours or longer to get information in the hands of doctors. The new process routes critical healthcare information electronically and provides immediate access.

Self-service replaces manual records requests

Access to patient-related documents by healthcare workers is now instant. Patient-related documents that were once requested, retrieved, and routed from storage, are now retrieved electronically. A request-records process that once took hours and sometimes even days, is replaced with a self-service, on-demand method that gives healthcare workers immediate access to information. Healthcare decisions that rely on access to patient documents can be made faster.

SMH has taken further steps to make it even easier for healthcare professionals to access digitized files immediately, right from within the EMR system. Custom integration allows doctors and healthcare clinicians to retrieve relevant patient documents at the click of a button in the medical records system. This allows healthcare workers to remain in the application they are already familiar with and using, and further speeds up access to files.

Privacy of healthcare records demands tight security

Security is another area where the flexibility of Document Locator has proven advantageous. With healthcare records governed by HIPAA privacy requirements, controlling who has access, and to which files, is an essential requirement. However, with multiple systems in place, managing users across systems can be a burden.

Based on the Microsoft NT security model, Document Locator's security and auditing capabilities eased the security management duty. Customizable roles and privileges restrict access to information according to compliance requirements. SMH took security management a step further with a custom integration that manages security across multiple systems, further simplifying user credentialing and establishing uniform access to information.

Paperless healthcare document management

Converting the last vestiges of paper to digital has had a positive impact on quality of care at Sound Mental Health. More immediate access by physicians means faster decisions are possible. For any healthcare facility, even those with the best of EMR systems in place, a strategy to converge the remaining streams of paper with electronic healthcare records is advantageous to doctors, patients, and administrators alike.

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