CASE STUDY

Wishard Health Services
Documents at speed for patients in need

A nationally-recognized healthcare provider needed a reliable way to deliver documents from their new suite of healthcare applications. Using VPSX® software, the hospital was able to deliver demographic face sheets and other critical documents in electronic and hardcopy forms — thus contributing to patient care and safety.

Organization

Indianapolis-based Wishard Health Services (Wishard) has been providing the people of Indiana high-quality, cost-effective healthcare since 1859. This integrated network of hospitals and clinics has an important mission: Advocate, Care, Teach and Serve, with special emphasis on the vulnerable populations of Marion County, Indiana.

More than just a regional healthcare provider, Wishard is home to a Level 1 Trauma Center, a highly-regarded burn center, and nationally-recognized mental health and women's health facilities. Close links to the Indiana University School of Medicine enable Wishard to both benefit from and contribute to cutting-edge medical research.

Efficient by necessity and by design

As a big-city health system, Wishard is charged with providing the highest levels of care across the full treatment spectrum. At the same time, the taxpayer-funded institution constantly looks for ways to "do more with less" and minimize unnecessary costs.

One area for cost control is the hospital's information technology backbone. Wishard has long been a pioneer in the use of electronic hospital systems. "In the late 80s and early 90s when few hospitals were thinking about EMR [electronic medical records] systems, we already had ours up and running," explains Dan Richardson of Wishard's IT Services group. "Our longtime collaboration with the Regenstrief Institute puts us ahead of the curve from an IT perspective."

However, Richardson is quick to re-iterate the focus of Wishard's IT investments. "We're tax based and community based, so anything that doesn't save us staff time or money is a non-starter around here."

Patient safety starts with positive ID

According to Scott Morris, Director of IT Services at Wishard, the hospital is in the process of implementing a new EMR system. Currently in Phase II of a three-phase rollout, Wishard employees are already using several of the EMR vendor's applications including an all-new accounting and patient processing suite.

"The admissions process is an extremely important part of a patient's hospital visit," explains Morris. In addition to the financial aspect of care, admissions is where the patient's identity first appears in the hospital's systems. "Incomplete documentation at this point prevents staff from positively identifying the patient. The first step in preventing medication dosing and other errors is verifying the patient's identity and presenting it on barcode wristbands, demographic face sheets, and other documents."

Once entered during the admissions process, a patient's medical and billing information may be shared between dozens of individual systems and departments. However, few integrated healthcare applications have the native document capture, formatting, and delivery facilities to ensure that patient data arrives in the right form exactly where it is needed — on time, every time.

VPSX just works; and with over 3000 registrations per day, it has to. Because we run a lean IT operation, that saves us time, money, and manpower. When it comes to healthcare documents, VPSX is one of the most powerful tools in my toolset.

Multi-mode delivery of critical documents

Modern integrated healthcare applications generate and manage huge amounts of data, from text-based patient and insurance information to high-resolution radiology files. However, in the words of Dan Richardson, "An application doesn't care about anything other than producing its data. From that point, it's up to the user or some external software to make that data useful."

For example, patient documents created by Wishard's current EMR system are routed to a single designated "port." Each port could represent a printer, a file directory, or other output destination. In practical terms, this can limit flexibility and create the need for separate dedicated printers for admissions, pharmacy, etc.

In addition to eliminating the expense of redundant physical printers, Wishard staff needed a way to deliver any single document to multiple destinations anywhere in the hospital's network. For example, an admissions form could simultaneously be printed at the front desk, emailed to a clinician's office, and sent to a COLD storage system for compliance purposes.

Richardson and his team found a simple yet robust solution to meet the challenge: VPSX® output management software from Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. (LRS).

Integrating the VPSX and new EMR solutions

To help Wishard and other customers meet these output challenges, LRS and the healthcare software provider developed a seamless interface between the EMR application and the VPSX solution.

The VPSX output server acts as an output destination that can route documents to printers, file directories, email addresses and more. Communicating with LRS-developed code running inside the EMR application server, the VPSX solution acts as a single, intelligent point of control for document delivery. "The flexibility that VPSX gives you is that it can send to a printer, an application, or a file directory… without any custom scripting on our part," explains Richardson.

After brief onsite configuration and training by an LRS® systems engineer, the IT Services group began to explore the capabilities of the VPSX server on their own.

The more things change...

As with any new system, Wishard's ongoing rollout of new healthcare applications will require clinicians and other employees to modify existing work processes. But change – even positive change – brings with it a great deal of uncertainty.

The new EMR application is very different from the system it is replacing. Nonetheless, VPSX software has helped hospital staff maintain their productivity regarding document-related work processes.

"There is no way we could do what the hospital needed to do without VPSX," explains Richardson. "Like sending documents to multiple destinations; without VPSX, we would have to generate a report multiple times or develop some custom code or completely change our work processes to work with the new application. Using VPSX, our user and business workflows remain unaffected."

The best feature of all

While the VPSX solution currently meets all of Wishard's existing needs, the IT Services team knows they've yet to tap the full potential of the product's capabilities. However, three basic qualities not found on any feature list – stability, flexibility, and scalability – are of even greater value to them. In the words of Dan Richardson: "VPSX just works; and with over 3000 registrations per day, it has to. Because we run a lean IT operation, that saves us time, money, and manpower. When it comes to healthcare documents, VPSX is one of the most powerful tools in my toolset."