



PharmaCorr

Filling the bill for high-volume order processing



PharmaCorr, a subsidiary of Correctional Medical Services, Inc. (CMS), has been providing pharmacy services, clinical pharmacy analysis and educational programs to correctional facilities for over a decade. As one of the largest correctional pharmacies, they operate out of two pharmacies — in Oklahoma City and Indianapolis — and serve over 200,000 inmates in 24 states. Between the two pharmacies, they receive over 120,000 fax pages each month and dispense an average of 16,000 prescriptions a day.

In addition to providing superior pharmacy services, PharmaCorr prides itself on the seamless delivery of these services to correctional facilities nationwide. In recent years, the Oklahoma City and Indianapolis facilities have undergone multimillion dollar automation and technological upgrades to become the most advanced correctional pharmacies in the country. These facilities now boast robotic and bar-coding technology for unsurpassed speed and accuracy in the dispensing process. With this cutting-edge technology, PharmaCorr is poised to meet the growing needs of correctional healthcare with the utmost efficiency.

Patrick Corbin is Manager of Systems Integration at PharmaCorr, supporting computer controls, servers, PCs and other technology components that interface with pharmacy operations. Corbin is also a licensed pharmacist.

Challenge

With 35 data entry workstations, PharmaCorr receives prescription orders from correctional facilities via fax. They need to determine what facility each order is from, when it was received (to meet SLA requirements for shipping time), whether it is a refill request or a new order, and any special restrictions or requirements according to the particular state or facility. Pharmacy board requirements mandate retention of new orders for 5 years.

Up to the point of dispensing, the process was completely manual and paper-based. “Just prior to implementing Esker DeliveryWare, we had automated the dispensing side,” said Corbin. “But there was still a lot of paper, so the next phase was to get rid of it.”

The process required paper handling by no less than 6 people before being filed. “Between receiving the fax and filling the order, the paper would occasionally be prematurely placed in the stack to be filed,” said Corbin. “We could see the order was put into our pharmacy application, but the document that went along with it was somewhere in a 3-foot stack of papers.”

PharmaCorr had 4 high-volume fax machines and 4 inbound fax lines. New orders would be separated from refills, copied and stapled together. Technicians and staff

would take orders to their desks. They would enter new orders, print out patient labels and clip them to both copies of the new order sheets.

Those orders would go to a pharmacist for approval. Part of the label was a peel-off audit sticker with some basic information that the pharmacy board requires. Corbin recalled, “We would affix the sticker to the back of the copy and send the labels, along with the original copy, over to the dispensing line. The copy that was made along with stickers affixed to the back of it would go into our filing system. The order sheet and the labels were carried to the dispensing area and the order would be filled.”

Another pitfall of the paper system was occasional information loss when faxes jammed, due to the memory limitations of the fax machines. Also, on holidays a staffer would have to come in to the pharmacy to take the papers off of the fax and reload the machine.

“After the paper orders were filed, if we need to retrieve a document, it was a tedious manual process,” Corbin added. “So we wanted to eliminate that.”

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Patrick Corbin ■ Manager of Systems Integration ■ PharmaCorr



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Solution

"What stood out to me about Esker was price and flexibility," said Corbin. "When I contacted them, I was impressed by the familiarity with the product. The rep was very helpful in helping us understand what capabilities were available. With other vendors, either the price was outrageous or they were not able to accommodate exactly what we were doing. Some said, 'Here's what it does; you'll have to bend around this.' And we probably could've done that, but we've experimented a lot and we know what works for us. We weren't willing to make a lot of changes on our side; we wanted a solution that mirrored the way we were doing things. Esker has hit a home run as far as that goes."

Mapping the flow

Corbin worked with Esker to map out the automated process flow. To realize his vision, Esker DeliveryWare uses OCR, barcode recognition, handwriting recognition and caller ID to identify the order type and cost center for routing to the appropriate technician or pharmacist. Based on the order information and Esker DeliveryWare policies interacting with Active Directory, business rules determine what users can see within in the Document Manager interface as well as document processing workflow corresponding with different classes of users.

Corbin set up a Document Manager view in Esker DeliveryWare to show only orders within the day's cut off time for different zones, another view for orders requiring pharmacist approval and a third view of all orders. Corbin notes, "Using the Esker DeliveryWare policies function, different classes of users only see the orders that they have access rights to. So I don't have to worry about anyone getting into anything they're not supposed to."

Accessibility

Esker DeliveryWare also generates a unique sheet ID, which is used to link the image to the prescription number in the company's pharmacy application. "If there's something we need off of an original document, we can easily retrieve it," said Corbin. "Users just enter the prescription number, and the order image is displayed along with all the information they need — from the time it was entered to the time it left the building."

New orders are automatically stored in an electronic archive with retention set for 5 years.

Benefits

Esker exceeded PharmaCorr's 5-second benchmark for processing time. In most cases they are at 2 seconds between one order leaving the screen and the next one coming up. "It's a huge savings to have this process on the Esker system," said Corbin.

Core results for PharmaCorr included:

- Quick and easy access to **current orders**
- Faster access to **archived orders** compared with the previous process
- **Significant cost reductions** within the shipping process
- Savings of **\$3,000 per month** on paper and toner

While volume in Oklahoma City has risen to 90,000 pages per month, PharmaCorr has been able to eliminate positions devoted to filing. Prior to implementing Esker DeliveryWare, PharmaCorr had two full-time employees and 2-3 part-time employees devoted to filing. After the implementation, these positions were eliminated through layoffs, attrition or job reassignments.

Visibility

Now Corbin and his colleagues can see exactly how many pages are received and processed each day. From any computer, they can pull up Document Manager and see if they need to devote more resources to order entry. According to Corbin, "It's much easier to manage staffing in the different areas. We know the number of new orders and refills waiting to be processed, which is important because we want the most experienced and skilled technicians working on new orders. We've got all that in the Esker system."

Esker DeliveryWare has also reduced order shipping costs. "Each day we have smaller orders waiting to be released when we know there's nothing else coming in for the facility," said Corbin. "With the paper system it was difficult to know which orders were ready to be released. A supervisor would have to walk around and write down what was still being worked on. Now we can quickly see what's waiting to be entered, so we avoid multiple shipments."

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