



SHEFFIELD CARE TRUST

Cost-Effective Electronic Medical Records Improve Safety for Patients and Staff

In the UK, Care Trusts are set up when local authorities and the National Health Service (NHS) determine that local constituents would benefit from a closer relationship between healthcare and social care. One of only two care trusts in the north of England, Sheffield Care Trust (SCT) delivers mental health services for adults and older people in the city and provides learning disability services. Operating in partnership with Sheffield City Council, SCT has been a three-star organisation for the past two years and has validated to the Health Commission that it complies with the NHS Core Standards for Better Health. The Core Standards assess an organisation's safety, care environment and amenities, clinical and cost effectiveness, governance, patient focus, accessible and responsive care and public health.

In order to maintain compliance with these standards and fulfil its mandate to the residents of Sheffield, SCT began looking for a way to better manage the abundance of patient medical records and improve access to them. In looking for a cost-effective solution that would support the creation of electronic records and integrate with an existing patient administration system, SCT chose an OnBase enterprise content management (ECM) solution implemented by Avanquest UK Ltd., an OnBase authorised solution provider.

OnBase is an integrated ECM software suite with core competencies in document imaging, electronic document management, records management, COLD/ERM and business process automation. To comply with the need to store many medical records indefinitely, documents are being scanned into a centralised OnBase repository, rather than stored on microfiche or scanned by a service bureau.

"The quality of the fiche and imaging were poor, and those documents couldn't be integrated into our current system," SCT's Director of IT Tom Davidson says. "OnBase also makes it easier for us to provide access to documents from anywhere. Right now we are going into 2.5 million pages stored in OnBase. The decision to go with OnBase was also made on a technical level. We were impressed with how OnBase coped with various scenarios, and it was much more stable than other software. We like the simple OnBase Web Client because we are trying to move away from complexity for technicians; they just want to be able to click and view document. Many other products have complicated ways to get what after what you're looking for."

Document Access Reduces Risk

Incoming patient documents are currently being scanned as they come into several SCT sites. The scanned documents are associated with the patient records maintained in the internally developed patient administration system, which is built on a SQL database and uses Visual Basic® scripting. Davidson notes that integration with SCT's storage area network (SAN) provides fast, reliable access to OnBase via the Web Server.

"Because they are scanned as soon as they come into the organisation, all the information is there for 24-hour access, which is vital to process resolution and safety. In the past, if someone received a call in the middle of the night, they might not be able to get information about that person, such as known risks or drug histories. Having that information also stops drug errors and other problems. OnBase has reduced risk dramatically."

Over time, SCT plans to push more of the scanning out to small desktop scanners located at approximately 30 locations. "We're finalising protocols for scanning right now," Davidson comments. "We must have a standard that ties in exactly to how users have to use it - and we have to make sure they use it. It's important to have the buy-in from clinicians to really get the value from it."

Based on the feedback from users, they are recognising the value of the OnBase solution, which contributes to the IT Department's overall goal of encouraging widespread and effective use of computer systems. OnBase usage has increased steadily since the solution was implemented as users use the system to improve communication, including reviewing clinical notes and results and adding new notes of their own.

"I was talking to some users recently, and they are much happier with OnBase," reports Davidson. "They have better opinion of the data in the system and are taking more time and care with it because they know they want to use it and see real benefits of making sure it's accurate. One aspect of the many pieces of work we're doing is to make use of computers widespread and make sure people use them and use them well. We've done that by making useful things appear when they need them. Because we have the infrastructure in place, we will be able to promote better mental healthcare in the UK. We are leading in terms of our use of computers."

AT A GLANCE

Sheffield Care Trust has improved patient care and safety by making millions of medical records more readily available to clinicians and caregivers by cost-effectively integrating electronic document management with its existing patient administration system.

BENEFITS

- Eliminates costs and delivers higher quality than microfiche and outsourced document imaging
- Reduces space and labour devoted to maintaining paper-based files
- Support for remote access improves availability of documents needed for patient care and safety
- Integrates with existing patient administration system to minimise disruption to clinicians
- Can be supported and developed with modest IT resources
- Provides a foundation for ongoing process improvements

APPLICATION

- Patient Medical Records

ONBASE SOFTWARE

- Desktop Document Imaging
- Query API
- CD Authoring
- Disconnected Scanning
- Web Server

COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCT INTEGRATIONS

- Canon Europe document scanners
- In-house patient administration system

Enterprise-Class Software with a Lower Total Cost of Ownership

Improved patient care and fewer errors are difficult to measure, admits Davidson, but OnBase also provides tangible benefits. The amount of floor space and time devoted to document storage has been significantly reduced, freeing these resources for patient care. The costs of creating microfiche and contracting with a scanning service have also been eliminated while giving SCT more control over its document processes.

The design of OnBase itself also makes it a good financial investment for organisations with tight budgets. OnBase supports incremental enhancements and expansion, allowing organisations to add new components as needs change or funding becomes available. Unlike some software packages that are suitable only for a single purpose, OnBase provides SCT with a foundation on which to cost-effectively build solutions for other departments. "We're considering how it can be used in human resources and finance for requisitions and internal paperwork," says Davidson. "From the beginning, we had been looking for something we could adapt and use in different scenarios."

As SCT strives for continuous improvement in attaining – and exceeding – the Core Standards for Better Health, OnBase can help support this important mission. "Because of the support we've had from OnBase and Avanquest, we've been able to maintain the system with few technical staff and been able to develop with it," comments Davidson. "It's reliable and usable right out of the box to get where we want to be quickly."

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