



Automating the financial assistance process to improve patient satisfaction

At one of the country's largest Catholic health systems, compassion for its community members is foundational. That's why individuals seeking financial assistance at its hospitals don't wait days to find out if they'll be able to get care. Thanks to the implementation of an automated patient financial assistance application, the patients know within hours.

But that wasn't always the case.

Before the nationwide health system started using Quantum Enterprise Content Solutions (formerly ChartMaxx), the award-winning enterprise document and data management technology by Quest Diagnostics, its patient access and accounting staff members were doing everything manually, said one of its senior technology managers.

Produced in partnership with

Himss Media



“(The departments) were able to see a big improvement in productivity as they moved to an automated process.”

Senior Technology Manager

Staff had to manually calculate and refer to numerous spreadsheets to complete applications, which meant a long wait for anxious patients and a lot of inefficient and frustrating steps for staff. “That piece of paper went through a lot of hands and constantly had to be updated,” said the technology manager.

Patients were unhappy and staff productivity was down. Something had to be done.

Patient access and accounting staff members wanted automation technology that would increase patient satisfaction, productivity, turnaround time, and quality as well as give them easy access to the data elements they needed, especially for audits. “They came to us and said, ‘What can we put in? There’s got to be help here,’” said the IT manager.

Quest Diagnostics: A successful partnership

The health system partnered with Quest Diagnostics because when it saw what the Quantum technology could do, the team knew this solution could meet its needs.

The technology offered the ability to integrate tools already being used by the health system, the efficiency of real-time processing, and the use of single sign-on within an application programming interface (API). It also provided the opportunity to develop the application from the ground up, making it configurable to the health system’s requirements.

And because of the solution’s flexibility, the health system’s IT team can make its own modifications. “That’s really important to us,” said the senior technology manager. “We like to be able to make modifications and enhancements ourselves, so that’s the kind of relationship we’ve worked toward with Quest. For the more difficult tasks, we do reach out to them and have them work on it.”

The first hospital network in the health system to use Quantum Enterprise Content Solutions was not yet a part of the nationwide system when it launched the technology in December 2001.

“It was a big deal,” said the health system’s senior technology manager. “(The departments) were able to see a big improvement in productivity as they moved to an automated process.”

A report the health system completed in 2011 highlighted some of the results achieved from the entire Quantum solution set. For example, from FY2002 to FY2010, the Quantum solution enabled:

- 22.7% increase in processing accounts
- 15.6-day reduction in accounts receivable
- Increased cash flow of more than \$56 million
- Elimination of manual, paper-based tasks and lost documentation
- Reduction of approximately 100 FTEs
- Creation of an audit trail at the patient level



After the hospital network joined its nationwide system, and the larger team saw the benefits and efficiencies afforded by the Quantum solution, the tool was rolled out across the entire system – consisting of 93 hospitals and 109 continuing-care facilities in 22 states.

“(Executive leadership) is constantly looking for these types of tools to improve our business flow,” said the senior IT manager. “That’s their job. I think when they see something like this and see the power of it – what it can deliver – that’s why they support it. It’s been very good, and (the other facilities) have seen a lot of the same benefits (as the original hospital network), but there’s still more to be done, and that’s what drives us to the next tool and the next solution.”

Patient financial assistance 2.0

As with the rollout of any technology, once it gets into the hands of those using it every day, suggestions for version 2.0 start coming in. “We had a long list of enhancement requests,” noted the IT manager. At the top of that list was a desire to reduce the number of clicks staff members needed to move between the various financial systems gathering data.

Over the years, as staff members worked within the Quantum tool, they’d say, “Gosh, this is really nice, and I really like it, but I wish I knew what the charges were on this account right now,” said the senior IT manager. Quest Diagnostics had just the solution: a process automation module that is tailored to meet the health system’s needs. “When we realized Quest had this tool, and (we) saw the capability of (it), we said this would be perfect and would be a perfect fit.”

The tool will integrate some of its financial systems, including some patient accounting elements, the Enterprise Content Solutions application and, patient registration, to further automate and streamline business processes.

Expected benefits include:

- Real-time assistance qualification for patients
- Integrated systems to further reduce paperwork
- Ability to track patient status across various work systems
- Reductions in cost-to-collect
- Easy access to data for metrics reporting and employee productivity monitoring, which will enhance analysis and help grow the health system over time

The health system's IT team is currently working with Quest on the configurable tool, and expects it to soon go live in the health system's Western region; but already it is anticipating the future, according to the senior technology manager.

The nationwide, Catholic health system started the journey toward improving the patient financial assistance process after its patients had to wait days to learn how – or even if – they would be able to get financial assistance to cover the care they needed. Because of the health system's ethos of compassion, its patients now have to wait only hours. Thanks to this provider's partnership with Quest Diagnostics, the day is soon coming when patients won't have to wait at all.

GOALS ACCOMPLISHED

- *Auto-populating and auto-calculating fields reduce human errors*
- *Discrete reportable fields enhance statistical analysis and workflow routing*
- *Electronic documentation and storage means no missing documents and no physical storage costs*
- *Efficiencies allow staff to take on additional work, eliminating the need to hire additional employees*
- *Improved application process increases patient satisfaction*



About Quest Diagnostics:

Enterprise Content Solutions (formerly ChartMaxx) is part of the Quantum technology portfolio from Quest Diagnostics. Quantum Enterprise Content Solutions empowers healthcare organizations to leverage the information needed to help support and improve patient care, drive operational efficiencies, and lower costs. Users achieve 24/7 concurrent access to structured and unstructured content, whether it be the complete legal health record or business records, organized to reflect targeted and proactive data. Enterprise Content Solutions, with its Business Process Management, helps improve workflow across the enterprise and provide seamless access to data from clinical, Health Information Management, Patient Financial Services, supplies and materials management, vendor and payer contract management, Human Resources, and more.

To learn more, contact us at 1.800.444.6235 x2621 or info@Quantum.com.