

Case Study

healthcare

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James Graham Brown Cancer Center at the University of Louisville Hospital

Brown Cancer Center Gets Quick Access to Critical Patient Data to Help Save Lives—and Time

"We now have zero boxes of old paper records. We've freed up room for more space. And Ricoh got all of the scanning done three months ahead of schedule—at a very reasonable cost."

- Doug Satterfield
Director of Radiation
Oncology
James Graham Brown
Cancer Center
University of Louisville
Hospital, Kentucky



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Having immediate access to the patient information you need, in the form you need it, is critical for any hospital. Doctors are pressed for time and need all patient records at their fingertips to make a quick, accurate diagnosis. Patients—especially those with advanced illnesses—don't want to be stuck in waiting rooms longer than necessary while their health records are being tracked down. Or worse yet, having valuable medical history lost because records can't be located.

Like so many hospitals today that have transitioned to electronic medical records, James Graham Brown Cancer Center at the University of Louisville Hospital in Kentucky was at a crossroads for information management. Its patient records from the last 10 years were all digitized and immediately accessible. Yet the center was overflowing with legacy paper documents—many of which applied to current cancer patients receiving ongoing care.

Despite the situation, there was no plan to convert its boxes and boxes of paper information into digital format anytime soon. The center was making due with its disjointed information management system that complied with federal electronic medical record guidelines but fell far short of making the right information accessible, at the right time, to streamline patient care and improve the patient experience.

CHALLENGE

- Approximately 475 boxes with legacy paper patient records and film images
- Time-consuming process to access paper patient records stored on-site
- Costly, slow response offsite storage partner for majority of paper records
- Need to expand, yet limited hospital space

SOLUTION

- Ricoh Document Conversion Services
- Rigorous chain of custody procedures
- Tight quality assurance
- Secure hard drive backup

RESULTS

- Backfile scanning completed in half the anticipated time
- 100% paperless health records
- Access to electronic patient records in seconds
- Two free rooms now available for patient care needs
- Reduced risk of lost legacy patient files

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CHALLENGE

Often, it takes fresh perspective to shift from merely recognizing a problem to taking action to solve it. When Doug Satterfield, Director of Radiation Oncology, joined Brown Cancer Center he saw that information availability was not where it needed to be for the center.

He was shocked to find two full rooms brimming with boxes of legacy paper patient records. These file farms housed approximately 475 banker boxes full of paper charts and more than one million images—MRIs, CT scans, graphs and other diagnostic tests. The only way to locate a patient record or image was to reference numbers on the outside of the box—a process that continually frustrated medical records techs in charge of tracking down paper records and kept patients waiting.

“If a patient came in who had been treated before we went electronic, we’d have to hunt through boxes and boxes of charts to find their records,” said Satterfield. “We were wasting a lot of time because we never knew where a chart was, or which doctor or nurse had it last. I knew there had to be a better way.”

That was just for the records housed on-site. Most of its paper records were stored offsite at a document management company, requiring Brown Cancer Center to pay monthly storage fees as well as retrieval and return costs when it needed a paper chart. In addition to cost, the document management company was slow to respond to requests for patient records.

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Brown Cancer Center was also eyeing more space within the hospital to expand. With hospital floor real estate in high demand, Brown Cancer Center believed it could fill immediate needs by clearing its paper storage rooms to make way for more patient care areas.

But it wasn’t as simple as just shipping its boxes to the current document management provider and continuing with the status quo for offsite storage. Brown Cancer Center wanted to digitize all of its legacy documents and get them into its existing EMR system. It needed to access paper records quickly during the electronic conversion process. Chain of custody and quality assurance had to be airtight.

SOLUTION

But what services would make information work more efficiently for the center? What provider would be the best partner to help re-purpose this information trapped on paper and images and make it available within seconds?

Satterfield began discussing options with its current document management provider and Ricoh, which was already managing and staffing the hospital’s copy and mail center, overseeing the printer fleet and providing HIM scanning services. Initially, Ricoh was the underdog because it hadn’t worked with the oncology department before. But the playing field quickly shifted and Ricoh emerged as the frontrunner for scanning and conversion services.

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To fully convince Brown Cancer Center of Ricoh's capabilities, the Ricoh team took Satterfield through its rigorous chain of custody procedures. This process ensures that each document is accounted for from the time it leaves a customer site to the time it's returned in electronic form.

Ricoh also reviewed its tight quality controls with the center and assured Satterfield he could review each batch of scanned documents to make sure they met expectations. Ricoh even offered to split the work between two of its scanning centers—a local facility in Louisville and another in Indianapolis—to fast track the process. Satterfield was sold.

Ricoh began by inventorying every single paper chart and piece of film in all the center's boxes, and then provided the center with the full list. If a patient with paper records came in for an appointment, all the center had to do was call Ricoh.

"If we needed a paper chart that was offsite in Ricoh's custody, we'd just have to call and Ricoh would deliver it. We were never without our records for the entire process," said Satterfield.

After scanning, Ricoh provided digitized records to the center on DVD for entry into the center's EMR system as well as on a secure hard drive for backup. Each record was indexed and classified to make it easy for physicians, nurses, researchers and administrative staff to find records in the EMR system.



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RESULTS

Working with Ricoh to digitize its legacy paper records has increased the Brown Cancer Center's productivity and reduced staffing costs. It is now completely paperless, relying only on electronic records that are easy for staff to find and access 24/7. It used to take the center's medical records techs minutes—occasionally even hours—to find a paper patient chart. Now, electronic patient records are right at their fingertips.

"We went from having three medical records techs to one now because we can find a patient record in seconds," said Satterfield.

Quick Turn, More Space

Ricoh completed the entire project in just three months—half the time of the original agreement. Now, instead of file farms occupying much needed real estate, the center has two additional rooms it can use for patient care.

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Paperless, Peace of Mind

Satterfield is so satisfied with the electronic records provided by Ricoh that he gave the go-ahead to destroy all the center's legacy paper documents. He doesn't worry that the electronic records will ever be lost. Besides the physical hard drive Ricoh provided with all the electronic files, the center's IT department backs up the files nightly.

"We have so many backups—we don't even have to think about losing our old records," said Satterfield

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