

# Inside Perspective

Helping you unleash the full power of MEDITECH

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## **Is Your MEDITECH System Optimized?**

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Many hospitals we work with have been using their MEDITECH system for more than five years; some, as long as 20. In that time, MEDITECH has expanded its capabilities dramatically. The enhancements have not only been from a technology and scalability perspective—from MIIS to Magic to Client Server—but also across the continuum of care, whether hospital-centric or provided through ambulatory care, home care, or long-term care. Given MEDITECH's expanded capabilities, the question we often ask healthcare organizations is, "Have you made the most of your MEDITECH system?"

### **Realizing the Full Value of Updates**

Frequently, healthcare organizations do not have the time to evaluate MEDITECH enhancements in detail, or to fully assess the benefits and potential return on investment (ROI). Ring releases often are scheduled to meet a specific need, as with the Y2K release. This required multiple ring release updates for many hospitals, and time did not allow many of the system enhancements to be exploited.

We are approaching a government mandate for the HIPAA 837 ANSI standard electronic claim format, to be in place by October, 2003. This will result in another required ring release focusing on the new electronic claims formats. All registration areas will need to collect additional subscriber information with a new screen added in the insurance dictionary. Other registration feeds to the claim forms will change as well. This mandate will provide an opportunity to standardize your claim form design, but consider your alternatives carefully, as all the standards have not been finalized and there remain different set-up options to be evaluated and implemented. You might also use the preparation time to evaluate current workflow processes in patient accounting, coding, information systems, and admissions and realign business methods for a more efficient process.

The truth is, every time you do a ring release, you should use the opportunity to look at your workflow and leverage the technology. Without doing this, you can not fully realize the potential of your system or maximize the return on your MEDITECH investment.

### **Enhancements, Technology, & Optimization Opportunities**

MEDITECH software and technology enhancements have worked hand-in-hand to enable vast improvements across all departments and applications.

For example, MEDITECH's clinical systems have made dramatic leaps in the last five years. The use of laptops, wireless, and handheld devices has made on-line clinical documentation and flow sheets a reality at many hospitals. Electronic signature in diagnostic areas has reduced down-time and improved workflow. The on-line medication administration record (MAR) provides more accurate and accessible patient information and has changed how the nursing and pharmacy departments interact. Bar coded patient wristbands, face sheets, and laboratory tests enable positive patient identification, reducing errors and improving process efficiencies. CPOE/POM is being implemented, allowing for real-time drug interactions, dosages, and allergies to be evaluated at the time of ordering.

The use of bar code and scanning technology has also enabled inventory management, patient chargeables, and the entire supply chain process to be streamlined. Integration with the OR and automation of preference cards have resulted in greater efficiency and cost savings.

Upgrades to the financial applications have been significant as well. In addition to the electronic claim form developments, updates effecting interim billing, on-line reminders, and collection routines have assisted in the reduction of outstanding AR days.

To fully realize the improvements possible with technology and application upgrades, we work with many

of our clients to develop and execute a detailed plan. Included in the plan is a full schedule for such things as training, set-up, and roll-out. Many years of consulting experience in this area have taught us that it's the details that are critical to success.

### **A Suggested Method to Optimize a Ring Release**

Ring releases and upgrades provide an opportunity to take a fresh look at your MEDITECH system and determine how you can best meet current needs and optimize workflow. It pays to give some thought to the best way to evaluate upgrades and leverage the system's capabilities. Some hospitals distribute updates to the various departments to review and test; the problem with this segmented approach is that the full benefits and risks of the upgrades may not be adequately captured—and often the knowledge is not shared in a timely and complete fashion.

Instead, we recommend that you gather a team from various departments to review and discuss each DTS and enhancement. This approach will enable the group to determine what impact the changes have across the organization. When budgets are tight and significant testing and implementation is required for system enhancements, the team can work together to determine the ROI associated with the various upgrades and prioritize the list. Then, after ranking the upgrades, keep an inventory of the recommended enhancements so they are not eternally shelved, but built into the strategic plan.

### **Areas of Constant Change and Optimization Opportunities**

Software upgrades and technology advances are not the only opportunities for optimization. Patient access is a dynamic model in healthcare today. The continuous addition and movement of services, clinics, and physician offices have a direct impact on patient flow through receivables management.

It's interesting to look back to the many MEDITECH sites that were implemented before CWS (Community Wide Scheduling) was introduced. The addition of Scheduling requires the entire patient flow process be evaluated, and it allows demographic, clinical, and financial information to be gathered prospectively instead of after the fact. This is a critical advantage for both patient satisfaction and financial verification. Any and all service changes require similar analysis and planning to determine how the model, systems, and resource requirements must change to meet current organizational demands without an adverse impact on safety or finances. Similarly, the roll-out of PCM (Physician Care Manager) which includes rounds lists, CPOE, ambulatory orders with a future physician desktop, and documentation functionality will completely change the workflow of physicians and clinicians.

### **So, Have You Made the Most of Your MEDITECH System?**

If you believe that the answer to our initial question may be "no," it's time to consider the opportunity you have to leverage the power of MEDITECH and technology enhancements. Prioritize the available upgrades against your organization's strategic goals such as patient safety, revenue maximization, and employee efficiency and then develop a detailed plan to execute each efficiently and effectively.

Of course, we're always ready to help.

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