

STORAGE SOLVED

SITUATION: Mercy Health Partners, a multi-hospital healthcare system in Northwest Ohio, wanted to shift from a paper-based medical records system to the digital age. It also set out to cut costs and improve efficiencies associated with existing paper files to be stored and managed for decades to come.

GOING DIGITAL

STORAGE SOLUTION HELPS MERCY HEALTH PARTNERS SHIFT TOWARD DIGITIZATION – AND SAVE 40 PERCENT ON MEDICAL RECORDS STORAGE COSTS



MULTIPLE STORAGE ISSUES

Mercy's three hospitals in the Toledo area serve some 250,000 people per year. It faced multiple medical records storage issues.

- Voluminous paperwork: In 2006, it had some 500,000 linear inches of files.
- EDMS migration: Plans called for migration to an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) beginning midyear 2007.
- Paper file retention: Files had to be managed cost-effectively during standard retention periods, which were 20 years for pediatric patients and 10 years for adults.
- Disparate storage: Mercy stored records at seven sites, creating lengthy turnaround times for locating, shipping and delivering records.
- Rising costs: A third-party vendor notified Mercy that its annual service fees for offsite storage would increase by 500 percent.



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Staff members can enter and leave aisles from either end, increasing productivity in accessing records. Photoelectric sweep sensors ensure safety by detecting when a person is in the aisle and shutting down the power. Aisle lighting turns on automatically when each aisle is accessed.

Mercy chose HIMentors, a health information management consulting firm led by Darice Grzybowski, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA, president, to serve as prime contractor and supervise the project on its behalf. HIMentors utilized a number of other subcontractors as part of the implementation team, including Central Business Group (CBG). CBG is a member of the nationwide Spacesaver Group.

The healthcare provider opted to build and operate its own Centralized Document Management Center (CDMC) vs. outsourced record storage or filming solutions. To do so, it renovated a 15,000-square-foot former laundry building at one of its campuses. At the heart of the facility are Spacesaver HDMS systems.



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Active records are stored in an eight-tier Eclipse Powered System™

Inactive records are stored in a 10-tier mechanical-assist HDMS unit. Forty years of financial records, totaling approximately 10,000 boxes, are stored in a third Spacesaver HDMS system and static shelving layout.

CBG's Professional Services Division handled the transfer and move of all financial and medical records. It included the creation of a database and printed bar code labels for each of the 10,000 boxes.

The CBG system allows electronic requests for boxed records throughout the Toledo Mercy Hospital system. It also provides an automated detailed retention schedule for the financial boxes and provides audit trails and location guides to enhance box management. Retention schedules help allow on-time destruction of financial records.

The project also left room for an additional 4,400 linear feet of records that were not included in the original plan. In addition, a mezzanine was added to hold 3,000 linear feet of business records.



Bar code labels are used to automate Mercy's new Box Record Management system.

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The strategic storage solution provides a number of tangible benefits. Specifically:

- Retrieval of records is faster and easier.
- Mercy now has space to implement the EDMS with all records management – electronic and paper-based – on one site.
- It costs approximately 40 percent less per year to operate the CDMC versus the cost for an off-site, turnkey document management vendor.
- Former records storage areas can be converted to patient care functions.
- The empty warehouses in Toledo can be sold or converted to other uses.

Finally, Mercy was able to merge its health information management staffs from the three hospitals. Yet it did so without the need to increase staff, even though the volume of records reached over a million. Efficiency in finding records has also increased significantly – and information management employee morale is up.

It's estimated that the Eclipse storage system, which has decreased retrieval time by 20 percent, will pay back its incremental cost within 2.5 years through higher staff efficiency – along with the eventual implementation of the EDMS solution and the centralization of paper medical records.



Mercy's Eclipse system features 45 carriages, each of which is 27 feet long and 88 inches high. The mechanical-assist (M-A) unit incorporates the use of 50 carriages, each of which is 32 feet long. Due to the weight of the system, gear ratios on the M-A unit were changed to allow one-hand access to the carriages. The four-tier HDMS system includes a total of 11 carriages, each of which is 38 feet long.