



Improving Patient Care Profitably

Why Streamlining Healthcare
Operations Matters to Everyone

Improving patient care is the ultimate goal for any healthcare organization. The challenge, of course, is how to improve care while ensuring the organization is financially viable, which in large part means operating efficiently and without waste. After all, you can't provide quality care if you don't have the staff, equipment and resources necessary to deliver it.

The healthcare industry has not historically been recognized for its efficiency, often resulting in enormous waste, rising costs and decreasing levels of patient care. In fact, a PricewaterhouseCoopers Health Research Institute report estimated that the industry wastes nearly \$1.2 trillion every year¹.

While a large portion of the waste cited in the report was related to unpredictable care-related services, like testing or unnecessary Emergency Room visits, more than \$300 billion of it was related to inefficient claims processing and ineffective use of technology. While these are certainly some troublesome issues, they also represent a huge opportunity for improvement for today's healthcare organizations.

The focus of this white paper is to shed light on three specific ways to leverage modern and mobile technologies to provide healthcare organizations with greater control over and visibility into their operations, which will in turn reduce waste and improve their operational efficiency.



ELIMINATE PAPER NIGHTMARES

Whether you work in a hospital or at a Fortune 500 company, manual data entry is a big problem. It's slow, cumbersome, error-prone, and expensive when you consider the time and resources consumed by not only recording the initial information but also transferring it into different systems and formats. Nevertheless if you walk the halls of any healthcare facility or office, you'll see clipboards, stacks of paper, and spreadsheets everywhere.

Digitizing the collection of data using modern, mobile technologies not only eliminates the common problems associated with manual methods of tracking data (think: stacks of paper forms and spreadsheets), but it can also help providers collect richer, more useful information. Armed with better information, your employees can be better equipped to help patients. That said when you think about improving your data management, don't limit your thinking to only patient-facing operations. There is much data that is collected and tracked that has an indirect relationship with the patient herself but can still have a huge

¹ <http://www.pwc.com/us/en/healthcare/publications/the-price-of-excess.html>

impact on her overall experience with your services. For example, a facilities employee could use a mobile device to conduct hospital room inspections by inputting data, taking photographs, collecting compliance signatures, capturing time and location information, or scanning barcodes. By improving the data you collect and track, you can take concrete steps to improve the condition of the rooms where your care takes place. Being cared for in a clean, well-stocked room without delays can certainly impact the patient experience at your facility.

You can easily apply this example to hundreds of manual operational tasks performed each and every day, such as:

- Checking inventory, supplies and their expiration dates
- Conducting mandatory regulatory compliance inspections & reporting
- Performing janitorial or sanitization work to ensure cleanliness
- Checking equipment in and out or tracking their maintenance
- Tracking rooms, hospital beds, schedules and more

Digitizing data collection not only eliminates errors and improves data quality, but it's also an enormous time and money saver. Think about the time and resources spent on re-keying data collected on paper forms or notes into other systems. Hundreds, if not thousands, of hours each month are spent on these manual activities alone. This potential for savings represents an enormous opportunity to decrease waste and increase profitability—which impacts both your bottom line and your quality of care.

IMPROVE REPORTING FOR BETTER DECISION-MAKING

Another key advantage of digitizing hospital operations is the ability to make faster, more informed decisions. Since data is captured instantly, accurately and is centralized in one place, real-time reporting and analysis can be performed immediately. This means there's no more waiting until the end of a shift, day, week or month to run reports. Instead, you can check reports that automatically update in real-time and share them with necessary parties to improve overall decision-making and patient care.

Modern work management solutions even allow you to visualize your data in reports, graphs, charts and dashboards, so you can easily draw meaningful insights from the data. These reports and charts are also fully interactive, which means you can drill into them to see the record-level detail behind them for added color and context.

Optimizing your supply, asset or inventory levels, a common challenge for many healthcare organizations, is a good example of the type of impact that real-time reporting offers. Be it equipment, supplies, pharmaceuticals or hospital beds, knowing what you have, what you don't have and what you need to re-order is critical to operating efficiently. Additionally since no one likes to wait for care due to delays caused by a lack of resources, this type of optimization also plays a huge role in improving your patient experience.

Like data collection, reporting is often a major time and resource sink. Digitizing the processes and data that make up your healthcare operations eliminates the time and headache of consolidating data, reports and readying them for review. Instead, reports are all done instantly, so you can spend your time improving your facility's capacity to care for its patients.

INTELLIGENTLY AUTOMATE KEY WORKFLOWS

The biggest development in recent years has been the ability to easily configure software to intelligently route tasks and work with little to no human intervention. For example, wouldn't it be nice to receive an email letting you know that you're low on a certain piece of inventory or type of supply? Or what if you could get a text alert letting you know that a room or doctor is ready to receive a new patient?

A modern work management solution, like TrackVia, takes things a step further by allowing users to configure "intelligent" workflows. In short, this means you set up very specific rules that automatically trigger specific tasks, alerts, or even kickoff new workflows. For example, you might want to take action long before you run out of something. Using a workflow solution, like TrackVia, you can set rules to send an email to vendors or your procurement team to reorder supplies when inventory levels reach a certain threshold, thereby avoiding expedited shipping costs or client dissatisfaction. Or maybe you want to notify hospital staff about an upcoming patient checkout that occurs 30 minutes ahead of schedule, so they're ready to turn the room around for a new patient as soon as possible. Intelligent workflow tools can make these ideal scenarios into realities.

Once again, the benefit potential to save time and resources through the use of process automation is enormous. When operations are streamlined and optimized: Work isn't delayed. Tasks don't get overlooked or missed. Missed handoffs of work are all but eliminated and ultimately care is provided without interruptions or delays. And if for some reason this doesn't occur, you at least know about it instantly, so you can address the issue in real time. Not only will your patients certainly appreciate the improvement in their level of care when automation is used, but your executive team will also notice the time and cost savings that it produces.

GET STARTED TODAY

Sure, digitizing your operations to reduce waste and improve efficiency sounds good. But where do you begin? As with most things, the general wisdom is to start small and expand over time. Unlike traditional software of the past, modern cloud-based workflow management solutions are highly scalable, which means you can start with small-scale projects, ideally ones that are simple and specific, and broaden your usage over time.

A good way to get started is to identify the process. Start by finding a workflow that's causing you, your employees, or patients' pain now, or one you think could be managed more efficiently. Many healthcare organizations pick areas, such as inspections, vendor management, inventory or equipment tracking, as a place to begin their improvement efforts.

Next, you'll want to establish a good baseline of what that process looks like today. Start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What steps need to be completed in order to complete your process?
- Do people fill out paperwork?
- What do they do with that paperwork?
- Do they enter data into another system? What happens after that?
- How is this information used? Who needs it?

Write answers to these questions all down on paper. This will not only help give you a solid baseline to measure against, but it'll also be helpful when you sit down with your technology vendor to configure a digital process to streamline and automate this work.

With your process identified and documented, a good rule of thumb is to select a workflow technology and run a pilot test. Often, this is done with a small group or department willing to provide input and feedback on what's working and what's not. Limiting your initial investment to a pilot not only helps refine and optimize your process before you go global, but it also helps keep costs small enough to avoid lengthy budgeting approvals from getting in the way.

Once you have put the new digital, technology-enabled process in place, you'll want to determine if it's producing results. In order to measure the impacts of your efforts, you'll want to gather as much hard evidence as you can. For example, how much money did the digitized process save over the old way? How much time did it save? Is your work more accurate or of higher quality? Did the new process eliminate errors, re-work or other manual tasks? Do the efficiencies you've created help enhance the patient experience?

Having this type of information will be important not only to measure your progress but also will come in handy if you want to expand the program and need to make your business case for incremental budgeting.

CONCLUSION

Reducing waste in hospitals and healthcare organizations can seem like a big task, but with the right tools, you can easily take steps to all but eliminate it. Remember that by driving operational efficiencies, you ultimately free up more resources to fully deliver greater patient care—and do so more profitably. After all, improving your quality of care at a sustainable cost is something that everyone can get behind.





TrackVia is a leading modern, mobile work management software that can be fully configured to fit your unique healthcare operations and processes.

TrackVia's detailed dashboards and live-data reporting give you enhanced visibility into your critical and complex operations and its unrivaled mobile capabilities make it easy for employees to enter data, scan barcodes, capture signatures, and collaborate on any iOS or Android device, even when offline.

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