

Kansas State University - Lafene Health Center

The Situation

Lafene Health Center, the student health center at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, is a full ambulatory care facility that includes primary care; women's, allergy, and sports medicine clinics; counseling; and its own laboratory, pharmacy, radiology, and physical therapy departments. The Center's staff includes seven full-time physicians and two nurse practitioners, as well as radiology and medical technologists, pharmacists, a physical therapist, and an athletic trainer.

The Health Center serves a student population of 18,000 and treats 300 to 350 patients per day. The high volume of patients makes it critical for patient encounter and clinical health history information to be entered accurately and on a timely basis.

The Challenge

At Lafene Health Center, 1.5 full-time employees were previously responsible for processing all patient encounter documents. The clinic did not, however, have back-up staff for these clerks. If a clerk was out sick or on vacation, forms were processed in a less than timely manner. "If encounter information doesn't get input, a lot of other staff members can't get their work done," said Sally Sowell, director of administrative services for the Health Center.

Another challenge the Health Center faced was the use of only one encounter form for all patient visits. The objective using a single form was to save money. "It seemed that all I was doing was dealing with how to get patient encounter forms processed," Sowell said. "The Docuscan system was the answer to our problems."

The Scantron Solution

The Docuscan patient information system includes blank scannable documents, software for creating customized patient encounter documents, and a scanner that recognizes and interprets data on completed documents. The blank documents are personalized according to the unique needs of each provider in the Health Center. Patient appointment and provider data is merged onto the documents, which are printed on a laser printer. During a patient encounter, providers simply "bubble in" the appropriate diagnosis and the procedures conducted. The completed documents are read automatically by an OpScan® scanner, which reduces both data entry time and errors. The scanned data is then automatically validated and posted into the files of a physicians' practice management software called The Medical Manager®.

The Results

After implementing Docuscan, Lafene Health Center was able to move one full-time data entry clerk into another position. "The Docuscan system has eliminated our bottleneck of unprocessed patient encounter documents, and it's very reliable," Sowell said. "Machines are here every day—they don't get sick and they don't go on vacation. For the administrative staff, the Docuscan system is wonderful. We're able to process forms faster and more accurately."

With Docuscan, the Health Center can allow patients to pay for the care they received at the end of their visit, before they leave the Center. In just minutes, a patient encounter document can be processed and charges posted.

One challenge Sowell faced early in the transition to scanned encounter documents was the medical staff's acceptance of the documents. Previously, when data entry clerks processed the information, the physicians relied on the clerks to catch their errors and decipher and code handwritten notes. Now, using Docuscan custom documents, the physicians have direct control over ensuring that procedures and diagnoses are properly linked.

"The process is getting smoother all the time," Sowell said. "Through modifying and perfecting the documents, we've been able to reduce the time spent completing them. With Docuscan, we have been able to make many variations of our patient encounter documents rather than use a single document to fit all visits.

"And we no longer have thousands of dollars tied up into an existing encounter document that we feel compelled to use up before we make a change. We continuously edit and fine-tune the documents created with Docuscan so very little information needs to be handwritten. Now when we add a new physician or change a procedure, we can immediately make that change on a document."