

CASE STUDY

OPTIMIZING PATIENT OUTCOMES AND REDUCING WAIT-TIMES BY MOBILIZING HOSPITAL STAFF WITH BLACKBERRY

Industry

- Healthcare

Region

- North America

Solution

- BlackBerry® 10 smartphones, BES, Oculys Performance, Oculys KeepNTouch

Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (CKHA) is a 200 bed community hospital equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and technologies that sees over 65,000 emergency room visits per year. Formed in 1998, CKHA is committed to core service excellence, top-flight operational performance and to being the facility of choice in the region. CKHA also serves as a teaching facility for the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry.

The Challenge

Efficient patient flow is critical in any hospital environment. It is especially important to minimize the time for a patient waiting in the Emergency Room (ER) to be admitted. Negative patient outcomes, such as the risk of deterioration, increase the longer a patient has to wait for a bed. For CKHA, the first step to improve patient flow was to provide better visibility for all their staff into what was happening across all areas of the organization.

“We would call admitting and be able to gather some information and then we’d be on the phone with the ER for other information. We would often be physically walking around to gather all of the information we needed to really understand what was happening in the hospital,” said Sarah Padfield, Chief Operating Officer at CKHA. “We were really good at knowing what happened yesterday, but were having a harder time predicting what today would be like.”

The next objective was to find a way to move patients out of the ER and into a bed more quickly. To achieve this objective, CKHA wanted to find a way to make it easier for the housekeeping staff to communicate to the rest of the healthcare team that rooms were clean and beds were prepared to accept new patients.

“In the past, we didn’t necessarily know when a bed would be available and ready in a timely manner. Patients were left waiting for an extended period of time in the ER,” said Padfield. “We didn’t have a clear idea of what was happening in housekeeping. It was something so simple, but we knew that we had to do something to make that part of the patient flow work more efficiently.”

The Solution

CKHA wanted a simple way to provide visibility into what was happening in the hospital. They engaged with Oculys, a healthcare technology company focused on delivering real-time, integrated support solutions designed for healthcare organizations. CKHA deployed a software solution called Oculys Performance to give all staff members a big picture view into the flow of patients throughout the hospital.

Since the staff at CKHA was already using BlackBerry® 10 smartphones, Oculys Performance is easily accessed by staff members via a web-based application no matter where they happen to be. “With one look, our staff can see the number of patients currently waiting in the ER and intensive care unit, compared to beds available,” Padfield said. “Oculys Performance tells me how many people are ready to be discharged or who requires alternative care. I can see same day visits or surgery patients that require admission. It’s an all-in-one, simple to view dashboard. And, since I’m usually on the go, I rely on my BlackBerry to get to all the information wherever I am.”



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Sarah Padfield

Chief Operating Officer, Chatham-Kent Health Alliance



CKHA then worked with Oculys on another solution, this time for their housekeeping staff. The hospital discovered that the housekeeping staff was already using personal BlackBerry smartphones to communicate with one another via a BBM™ group. Since the hospital was mindful of security issues, they elected to give the housekeeping staff corporate issued BlackBerry 10 smartphones, managed by BES.

Deploying BlackBerry smartphones with Oculys KeepNTouch, a housekeeping application, put a powerful tool in the hands of the staff that are at the front line of care. The Oculys KeepNTouch application is simple to use; staff can see which rooms they are assigned, and click on a 'start' button when they enter the room, which triggers a timer to measure how long it takes to clean each room. Once the room has been cleaned, they press an 'end' button and a notification is sent back to the central admitting department that the room is ready. There are also special instructions embedded in the application. "If there are exceptional circumstances required for a specific situation, such as cleaning a room where the patient was in isolation, the application guides the staff with checklists that apply to that particular situation," said Padfield. "This is especially important for the safety of our staff and to reduce the spread of infection."

Chatham Kent Health Alliance's Benefits:

Since deploying the Oculys solution on BlackBerry smartphones, CKHA has seen tremendous reduction in wait times for patients requiring admission. Prior to implementing the Oculys solution, the average patient wait time in the ER for patients between the time an admission was started to the time they got a bed was between 18 and 20 hours. Now, this average wait time is approximately 8-10 hours. This makes for a 50 percent reduction in wait times.

"Since implementing the Oculys solution on BlackBerry, our Ontario provincial ranking has improved significantly. We are now 6th in the province for patient admission wait times, versus 16th prior to implementing the solution. That's not only impressive to us, but we're finding that our patients are happier that they are being treated more quickly," said Padfield. Since risk of deterioration increases the longer patients have to wait in the ER, CKHA can also correlate an improvement in patient outcomes based on shorter wait-times.

The housekeeping application has improved communications between housekeeping and management and has reduced wasted time and energy in locating staff and assigning tasks. It has also been empowering for the housekeeping staff themselves. "This project has created a real sense of pride within our team because it showcases that we are a progressive group who can see the benefits that technology will bring to our work," said Carrie Sophonow, Housekeeping Manager CKHA. "Since implementing this solution, we are seeing increased efficiencies and new opportunities for our team to make a positive impact for patients at CKHA."

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Key Benefits

- Reduced patient admission wait times by 50 percent
- Streamlined workflow for housekeeping staff
- Improved patient satisfaction
- Improved patient outcomes



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