

## Southwest Washington Medical Center

### Southwest Washington Medical Center Pioneers High Performance Pharmacy



*Located in Vancouver, Washington, SWMC is recognized as a Top 100 National Hospital.*

#### Goal

- Improve medication safety and achieve superior inventory management

#### Solution

- Implement new processes and technologies to improve medication safety and inventory control

#### Results

- Increased speed and efficiency of medication dispensing by maximizing medication availability to nursing
- Established greater collaboration between nursing and pharmacy staff
- Enhanced inventory control, freeing pharmacy staff for increased clinical work
- Increased inventory turns by five—saving more than \$71,000 per turn since 2001
- Achieved a rate of 53 prevented medication errors (avg.) per 1,000 patient days

#### Customer Profile

Operating two campuses in Vancouver, Washington, Southwest Washington Medical Center (SWMC) offers the community integrated care through its inpatient and outpatient services. SWMC is a full-service, not-for-profit medical center that emphasizes clinical and service quality and promotes accessible and affordable healthcare. In recent years, SWMC has been ranked one of the 100 Top® National Hospitals and is known for its centers of excellence in cardiovascular care, women's services, family birth, and more.

Since it was first established, SWMC has consistently looked for and embraced new ways to drive higher quality service by using innovative technology and automation solutions. When Joe Ness joined SWMC as Director of Pharmacy in the late 1990s, he closely evaluated incremental efforts that had been made over the years to improve SWMC's pharmacy operations, including the move from a centralized to a decentralized medication distribution model. Next, Ness and a small multidisciplinary team worked

together to identify opportunities to further leverage emerging technologies, including bar-coded bedside medication administration, as part of a multiphase approach to achieve the highest levels of medication safety.

#### Creating an Industry-Leading Model

What started out as an initiative at SWMC to improve medication safety has evolved into an industry-leading model of High Performance Pharmacy in action. In fact, through its successful implementation of best-in-class processes and technologies to improve medication safety, SWMC has helped to pioneer the High Performance Pharmacy model that other leading hospital pharmacies strive to adopt today.

"Creating a High Performance Pharmacy is all about the patient," explains Ness. "You and your department have to believe that you haven't yet reached that highest level of patient care—that there is still room for improvement. That is our attitude every day at SWMC, and that's what has led to our success with this first phase of our

**"The High Performance Pharmacy approach is about never accepting the status quo. It's about continually looking at whether you have the right mix of people, processes, and technologies in place to provide patients with the highest quality care."**

- Joe Ness, M.H.A., R.Ph., Vice President, Ancillary and Support Services, Southwest Washington Medical Center

## SWMC's Goals for its High Performance Pharmacy Initiative

- Improve medication safety and achieve superior inventory management
- Increase speed and efficiency of drug dispensing to patients
- Strengthen relationship between nursing and pharmacy staff
- Minimize time spent ordering and receiving product

High Performance Pharmacy initiative. It is also this attitude that will drive us forward as we continue to look for new ways to improve the patient experience.”

### Building a High Performance Foundation and Embracing Change

Even in an organization as accepting of change and new technology as SWMC, Ness believed it was critical to establish a cooperative and successful partnership between nursing and pharmacy staff from the very beginning of the medication safety project. To ensure the new technologies and processes would be embraced across SWMC, Ness created a multidisciplinary project team—including pharmacy, nursing, physician, quality, and IT stakeholders—to spearhead the selection and implementation of new technologies and processes.

“By being part of the process from the very beginning, nurses and pharmacists have assumed a strong sense of ownership of the project. This collaboration has really contributed to the long-term success of our initiatives to improve patient care,” says Ness.

With the multidisciplinary project team in place, SWMC proceeded with its medication safety initiative by implementing bar-coded bedside medication administration. Now, each patient admitted to SWMC receives an armband with a bar code, which corresponds to the patient's current medical record, including drug history, allergies, and lab results. Bar-code identifiers also appear on each unit of dose. Before a medication is administered, bar codes on the patient armband and the medication are scanned, allowing the



*Southwest Washington Medical Center provides a full range of outpatient and inpatient diagnostic, medical, and surgical services to Clark County residents. Building upon its nearly 150-year history as the region's healthcare leader and steward, the medical center is undergoing a \$146 million expansion project.*

nurse or therapist to verify that the right patient is receiving the right drug in the right dose at the right time. The software checks each medication against the patient's pharmacist-reviewed medication profile. If conflicts or potential drug interactions are identified, warnings alert the nurse to double check, verify, and/or call the doctor before administering the medication.

In addition to bar-coded bedside medication administration, SWMC has continued to make improvements to its decentralized medication delivery process. Today, nurses are provided with more than 64 medication access points, housing over 90 percent of the hospital's medication inventory. With all medications bar coded and decentralized in unit-based cabinets (UBCs), nurses can ensure that the right medications are dispensed to the right

patients quickly, and without error. This process has also resulted in pharmacy staff having more time to spend on the hospital floor with patients.

"Pharmacy staff can now spend less time in the pharmacy and more time partnering with doctors and patients on the floor, helping to provide patients with the most effective medication therapy for their unique needs," says Donna Field, Director of Pharmacy and Cancer Services.

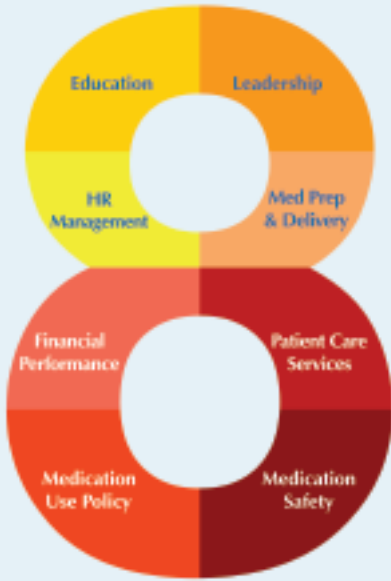
#### **Achieving Total Inventory Control**

Early in the process of implementing bar-coded bedside medication administration, Ness and team realized that any medication safety initiative would not be successful without a robust inventory management system in place to support it. "Inventory management is a challenge for any hospital pharmacy," explains Ness.

**"At SWMC, we're very supportive of change and of adopting new technologies and processes that will benefit our patients. Every institution has their unique challenges, and new obstacles are sure to arise every year. But technology can help address challenges from a different angle. I'm really amazed at the progress we've been able to achieve in establishing a High Performance Pharmacy by putting the right technologies, solutions, and processes in place."**

- Joe Ness, M.H.A., R.Ph.,  
Vice President, Ancillary and  
Support Services, Southwest  
Washington Medical Center





*The 8 Dimensions of High Performance*

**A High Performance Pharmacy is one that demonstrates the highest levels of patient safety, clinical quality, and financial performance. McKesson and the Health Systems Pharmacy Executive Alliance completed a landmark study that identifies the 8 Dimensions of High Performance—the programs, services, and practices at which a health system pharmacy must excel to be able to deliver the best clinical outcomes for patients and financial results for the entire health system. For more information visit [HighPerformancePharmacy.com](http://HighPerformancePharmacy.com).**

“Once we added the complexity of bar-coded medication administration, better inventory management quickly became imperative.”

To achieve this goal, SWMC adopted a pharmacy inventory management system provided by McKesson. Now, when reordering product, pharmacy purchasing staff simply use a handheld computing unit to scan in a product National Drug Code (NDC) bar code or shelf label, and the system automatically calculates a suggested order quantity based on purchase history. With the inventory management system in place, not only has SWMC been able to optimize inventory levels on the shelf, but it has also been able to increase inventory turns by five, saving more than \$71,000 per turn over the past five years.

In the end, SWMC's implementation of an inventory management system and order scanning system has resulted in a significant reduction in medication delivery time. Previously, nurses often waited from 45 minutes to over an hour for medications. By embracing a decentralized model, streamlining replenishment, and implementing unit-dose bar-code packaging, SWMC has more than cut this wait time in half. To the delight of nurses, physicians, and patients, it now takes only 20 minutes or less for medication to reach patients. More importantly, SWMC's medication safety initiative—which has included the implementation of key technologies over the past several years—has resulted in an average rate of 53 prevented medication errors (errors that do not reach patients) per 1,000 patient days.

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