Building on its culture of care, St. Mark’s hits the ground running with Paragon®

St. Mark’s Medical Center
La Grange, Texas
• 65 beds
• 23 physicians and 215 employees
• 47,600+ outpatient visits and 2,100+ admissions annually

Paragon Benefits
• Achieved Stage 1 meaningful use 92 days after go-live
• Reduced medication errors by 30% in the first quarter after go-live
• Achieved 96% CPOE utilization in less than 3 months
• Reduced discharge date to claim submission date by 2.5 days
• Reduced claims late charge incidence from 35% to 7%

By Patti Sulak, Senior Director of Information Technology

“Paragon has allowed us to bring technology to the bedside, to streamline care and help our clinicians focus on the patient.”

Patti Sulak
Senior Director of Information Technology
St. Mark’s Medical Center
Improving care in our community

As the healthcare industry continues to face challenges related to healthcare reform, those of us on the front lines in hospitals are tasked with keeping up with the pace of change. One of the most pressing needs healthcare organizations must address is implementing a hospital information system (HIS) to help them run more efficiently and enhance patient care.

The importance of finding the right HIS solution for St. Mark’s Medical Center really struck a chord with me after a neighboring hospital ran into difficulties attempting to achieve meaningful use. The organization implemented a new HIS, but unfortunately it didn’t help them meet financial and regulatory mandates and they were forced to close.

St. Mark’s has been an essential part of La Grange for several decades, and shutting our doors to our family, friends and neighbors was not an option. To me, that meant we needed to replace our prior HIS with one that would help us stay ahead of the tides of change and remain a vibrant part of our community.

Our search criteria were simple: We needed a system that was easy to use, included the clinical and financial applications we lacked, could be run with our current IT staff and could be implemented in a timely manner. I am proud to say that St. Mark’s selection of the Paragon® HIS has delivered on all of our search criteria, and it has helped us remain open to continue serving our community!

Enthusiastic staff aids rapid implementation

Having worked in the healthcare IT industry for over 20 years, I’ve worked with various HIS vendors, and I knew the challenges of long implementation times and getting user buy-in. Throughout our HIS selection process, I deliberately sought the opinions of our providers, because their buy-in of the new system would be vital to our success. Because our medical staff had a voice in the selection, they were excited about implementing Paragon, and we hit the ground running.

When the Paragon implementation process began, I honestly didn’t think our aggressive schedule could be achieved. Because the stakes were so high for us to get the new system up and running, I had a sense of doom throughout the entire process. With all the moving parts, I just kept waiting for the sky to fall, but it never did.

Thanks to the dedication, enthusiasm and collaborative effort of everyone involved, we went live on all of Paragon in just 13 months! Go-live went so smoothly that we were able to start

“Paragon really stood out as the one system with the capabilities that the St. Mark’s clinical staff was looking for and the financial system capabilities that we needed to manage and run the hospital.”

Brian Doerr
Senior Vice President, Information Technology
Community Hospital Corporation
demonstrating meaningful use two days after go-live and achieved stage one 90 days later.

Ease of use yields more efficiencies, better decisions

Like most hospitals, our employees’ workloads are at full capacity. I knew selecting an HIS that created efficiencies for our staff would aid in user adoption. I also knew we needed a system to fit the technical skill set of our medical staff, which ran the gamut from no experience to extremely savvy. I can honestly say that the intuitive, point-and-click Microsoft® technology and familiar Windows® design of Paragon has made it easy for our users to learn.

Our medical staff has readily accepted Paragon and incorporated it into their patient care routines. One of our most tenured physicians, Dr. White, told me after the fact that he dreaded the transition to Paragon, because he had not yet mastered his own practice’s EMR. Thanks to good training and the straightforward design of Paragon, Dr. White feels comfortable using the system. He especially likes using CPOE because of how easy it is to find and order medications. Being able to easily navigate through the system gives Dr. White visibility to all of his patient’s medications and history, which helps him decide what to prescribe based on past orders. Like Dr. White, most physicians quickly adopted the system, and we were able to achieve 96% CPOE utilization in less than three months!

Prior to Paragon, our physicians spent valuable time tracking down patient information in paper charts. By centralizing all of our patients’ information in Paragon our physicians can more efficiently manage multiple patients simultaneously. Dr. Blackwell, a family physician, said being able to quickly review the patient’s entire order history helps him better determine which medicines, labs or tests will be most beneficial for the patient’s current treatment.

Through our integration of PACS and Paragon, we have also significantly reduced the amount of time our physicians spend waiting for reports. Paul Bumpus, our director of imaging services, said reports used to take several days to complete, but now he reports that 98% of our imaging studies are completed within 24 hours. Quicker access to these reports allows our physicians to begin treating patients in a more timely manner.

Intuitive workflow, new functionalities enhance patient care

During the build process, our staff deliberately created workflows that kept a good interpersonal relationship between the patient and caregiver. In fact, Karen Killian, our director of surgical services, told me she loves the streamlined checklists in Paragon because she spends less time documenting and more time conversing with patients.

The Medication Administration application within Paragon has helped with documentation, reporting and patient safety. Since utilizing this new functionality, we have decreased medication errors — from 0.3% to 0.21% (30% reduction) in the first quarter alone. We’ve never had a high medication error rate but even small improvements like this go a long way in delivering better care.

“Paragon is a very logical system. CPOE is very well organized and easy to use.”
Daniel White, M.D.
St. Mark’s Medical Center

“Paragon’s ease of use was a pleasant surprise. It’s actually surprisingly pretty easy to view the patient’s test results, active orders, medication lists, nursing notes, etc. in the chart.”
Wess Blackwell, M.D.
St. Mark’s Medical Center
Some of the other functionalities our clinicians love are the built-in prompts, reminders and monitoring tools. Laura Quitta, our director of medical/surgical services, is pleased that Paragon gives her quick access to summarize patient care. With a glance at the red, yellow and green light notifications within Paragon, Laura can see the status of key tasks like medications, care plans and results. This intuitive design gives her team vital information to quickly assess patient needs.

Our patient financial services team uses the new functionalities of Paragon to automate once manual processes. Previously, the financial staff physically tracked down nurses to get missing charges. Now, the new clinician workflow within Paragon captures and sends charges immediately to the financial team. As a result, Dodie Stanley and her insurance and billing services team are billing claims 2-3 days faster than before, and they have reduced the amount of claims having late charges from 35% to 7%, on average. Dodie jokes with me that she misses seeing her clinician friends because she never tracks down charges anymore.

By getting claims out faster, the team has positively impacted both the financial performance and overall patient experience at St. Mark’s.

The culture at St. Mark’s is really built around providing care to our community members. I was pleased to see how well McKesson and Paragon aligned with us and fit within our culture. McKesson has helped us bring technology to the bedside to streamline our workflow and give us assurance that we are providing the best possible care. I will never be a caregiver, but I can take pride in knowing that finding technology solutions, like Paragon, will help St. Mark’s achieve its mission of providing quality care to patients.

“Paragon has helped with patient safety by giving us tools like alerts and care plan reminders to ensure quality measures are addressed. This helps us deliver better care.”

Laura Quitta, R.N.
Director of Medical/Surgical Unit
St. Mark’s Medical Center