Twin County Regional Healthcare
Galax, Va.

Successfully Implementing CPOE in the March to Meaningful Use

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-Janet Richardson

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Clinical Systems Coordinator
Successfully Implementing CPOE in the March to Meaningful Use
by Janet Richardson, RN

Everyone in healthcare these days seems to be focused on reaching Stage 1 meaningful use by the 2013 deadline. Aside from cost, one of the biggest hurdles may be successfully implementing a computerized physician order entry (CPOE) system and achieving the utilization levels required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) incentive program. At Twin County Regional Healthcare, we realized that this alone would require a significant change in how physicians and other caregivers have always practiced medicine, so we decided to take the challenge head on and have been very pleased with the results. Along the way, we’ve learned a lot.

We’ve managed to make great strides and our hospitalists hit 30% CPOE utilization for total orders by the second month after roll-out and have exceeded that threshold for the subsequent four months. We will continue to expand to more of our physicians, and we expect to begin applying for our incentive payments by the first half of 2012.

We think there are two key factors that have led to accomplishing our CPOE utilization success so quickly: 1) Establishing the right attitude and involvement among our physician-users and 2) The integration and capabilities of the Paragon® HIS.

Getting the Players on Board
According to Art Pemberton, M.D., our Hospitalist Director at Twin County, getting physicians to see beyond themselves as part of a bigger picture of the organization and of where national healthcare is going is most important to establishing the right attitude.

Jack Roberts, Director of Information Systems, and my supervisor, often points out the importance of meeting meaningful use to our rural, independent community hospital. Upon certification, Twin County would qualify for somewhere in the neighborhood of $5 million in incentive payments. Those dollars will go a long way in enabling us to provide new additional services to our community and acquire needed equipment for several departments to provide our patients the best care possible.

Helping physicians understand the bigger impact on the organization, their patients and the community in which they live really started knocking down any initial resistance. Another key is setting realistic expectations because as Dr. Pemberton also observed, “Rolling out any new computer system is not going to be as convenient for physicians and nurses for quite a while.” But we thought if the system satisfied our hospitalists, our other physicians would be much more willing to adopt CPOE.

That’s where the technological capabilities of Paragon started to shine.

Simplifying the Transition
One important measure I have used when rolling out any new system or application is how easy the intended users can learn and understand how to work it into their normal day-to-day care of patients. If it is not complicated to understand and use, that will facilitate uptake and adoption. It is also a pretty good indicator of long-term success.

The Windows®-based, point-and-click operation CPOE module in Paragon is both familiar and intuitive to physicians. In my experience in training physicians to use it, they adapt to it pretty quickly. In rolling out Paragon CPOE, physicians got an hour of training from the implementation specialist and then I
was available to answer questions or assist if necessary. Our hospitalists quickly learned the system and were able to place electronic orders with just a couple of follow-up questions after the initial training ... they just took it and ran with it. It was almost effortless!

One of our hospitalists actually compares it to shopping online. You pick out orders, put them in a basket and at the end when you have everything you need, you submit them. So using it is not something that is complicated or unfamiliar to them.

For example, we can customize order sets as we need to so that our physicians are comfortable and satisfied. I am fond of saying that the way Paragon is designed, if you can think of it, you can build it!

We have been able to easily convert existing protocols and standing order sets for physicians so what they are ordering is familiar to them, and the same Windows-based structure that enables ease of training also facilitates incorporation of the CPOE system into their day-to-day care of patients.

A telling example of this simplicity and familiarity is a locum tenens physician who had never seen our CPOE system before and was filling in for one of our staff. After 30 minutes of training and a couple follow-up phone calls, he began admitting patients and placing orders on the system that same evening.

**Technology that Works with Prescribers, not Against Them**

Perhaps the biggest physician satisfier I have seen with Paragon is its flexibility. Dr. Pemberton and the other hospitalists have acknowledged that a more rigid system would have faced more resistance. “We have found that the flexibility and customization you can do in Paragon is a real bright spot and a particular strength of the system,” he has noted. “We’re able to easily suggest improvements or modifications and get those implemented that same day.” I think that customization has given our physicians greater ownership in the success of our CPOE initiative and as a

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**Hospitalists CPOE Utilization (Total Orders)**

Twin County Regional Healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month 1</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Month 2</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Month 4</td>
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<td>Month 5</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Month 6</td>
<td>38%</td>
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Total Orders includes Laboratory, Radiology and Medication

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- Arthur Pemberton, M.D. Hospitalist Director

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- Jon Applebaum
  President & CEO
result played a significant part in their uptake and utilization.

The fact that Paragon is fully integrated and that all of the information is available via the Paragon WebStation portal is another huge plus. Being able to view a patient’s chart, diagnostic images and labs and now being able to place orders with CPOE through a single access point – even remotely from home or office – has increased physician buy-in and acceptance.

Everyone Pulling in the Same Direction
When it comes right down to it, everything we do should be about patient care — how to improve it, how to make it safer, how to make it more efficient and cost effective. For that to be accomplished, everyone that is directly or indirectly involved in the care of our patients needs to be aligned. Since we first became a customer of McKesson in 1998 right on up to CPOE and beyond, the whole organization has always been there to assist us in aligning and improving the care we provide to our community.

In 2009, Twin County was named one of the 25 “Most Improved” hospitals in the annual “Most Wired” Survey and Benchmark Report1, and Paragon played a big part in that accomplishment. That recognition was great acknowledgement for our executive team and our board members that we were headed in the right direction with the hospital information system.

As Jon Applebaum, our president and CEO puts it, “Our mission is to serve the healthcare needs of our community and provide the highest quality of care in the most cost-effective manner. The Paragon information system is well-designed for community hospitals like ours with a mission like ours.”

Successful CPOE Achievement is not a Straight Line
As noted earlier, we hit and maintained 30% CPOE utilization for total orders by the second month after roll out and have exceeded it for the four months since. We expect adoption and utilization by our hospitalists to continue to grow as CPOE becomes ingrained into their day-to-day practice of caring for patients and we are well under way to meet the meaningful use requirements. And as we anticipated, the experience with our hospitalists thus far has been good enough that other physicians not involved in the initial rollout are asking to participate in the next phase.

Like any initiatives that require human involvement and cooperation, implementing CPOE is neither simple nor turnkey. But with the right product, a solid process and a committed organization, we expect the success we’ve seen to date will continue to grow. Our experience tells me that we made the right choice, that CPOE on the Paragon platform has a bright future here at Twin County, and that it will be an important factor in our achievement of meaningful use and beyond as the delivery of healthcare continues to evolve.

1 2009 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study, Hospitals & Health Networks, American Hospital Association, July 2009