IBM

Winchester Admits Success with IBM Printing Solutions.

At the Winchester (Virginia) Medical Center, patients checking into the hospital no longer stop first at the admitting department. That's because there is no admitting department. Instead, patients go directly to their rooms, where an administrative associate secures admitting data using a wireless laptop. Face sheets are then printed on an IBM Network Printer in the nursing unit and transmitted across a LAN printer network to five other medical center departments.

The massive reengineering of the hospital's admitting function was the brainchild of an innovative TQM committee looking for ways to ensure patient-focused care while reducing admitting time and costs. According to Daryl Davison, Manager of I/S Hardware and Operations, the interdisciplinary group held many meetings before implementing the program that also shifted traditional unit clerk and admitting functions to the administrative associates.

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nursing station. They're constantly out on the units with their laptops, admitting patients, ordering supplies and performing other support functions."

By all indicators, the program has been a resounding success—a reduction of six FTEs, an expedited admitting process now also in place at the outpatient surgery center and valuable time saved because admitting forms no longer require manual distribution. Best of all, says an executive, "patients love the new system."

With 408 beds, Winchester Medical Center is the largest facility of Valley Health System, Inc. (VHS), the Winchester-based parent company. Other facilities owned or managed by Valley Health include Warren Memorial Hospital in Front

Application	Medical Center Admissions
Software	Advanced Function Printing
Hardware	IBM Network Printers, IBM 3130, 3160 Printers
Networks	Token-Ring LAN
Services	Availability Services

Royal, the Surgi-Center of Winchester, two urgent care centers, Valley Home Care and War Memorial Hospital in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. Several years ago, VHS became a member of Premier, Inc., the largest hospital alliance in the United States.

The fact that Davison's I/S department already had IBM Advanced Function Printing™ (AFP™) printers in place proved beneficial to the TQM initiative. The health system has had a long-standing commitment to IBM technology and AFP architecture and Winchester I/S professionals had written many applications to take advantage of this architecture. This, in turn, required AFP printers. Currently, Valley Health has upwards of 75 AFP printers, including at least 40 IBM Network Printers operating on a Token-Ring LAN. The health system also uses larger, distributed printers, including IBM 3160 Printers in the main data center and IBM 3130 Printers in high-volume areas.

Winchester Medical Center, Winchester, Virginia, is using IBM Advanced Function Printing to support an innovative, decentralized admitting process.

"We have been doing Advanced Function Printing for some time," says Davison. "AFP is really an IBM product that all IBM products support very well. During the TQM process, what we tried to do was utilize known technology to make the admitting process more efficient. In early meetings, we basically decided to use AFP technology as part of the whole project. At the time we were only using AFP in a limited role. As we worked

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through the process, it became quite clear that our direction was correct." This decision resulted in acquisition of at least 25 additional printers. Davison said that purchases could be cost-justified in savings on admitting forms alone. The six-part forms cost 35 cents apiece!

Chuck Hagen, a manager with Premier, Inc., served as an internal consultant on the TQM team. The printers, he says, "were viewed as an integral part of reengineering the administrative-clinical process in the patient care units. We probably couldn't have accomplished the project without them. We needed to be able to print forms right on the unit."

Valley Health personnel are using distributed printing to support other clinical functions, including individual nursing units' results summaries and some printing from the point-of-care system. Lab and Radiology professionals also use AFP printing for some of their forms. In addition, fortuitously, Valley Health has been able to use an IBM printer with a document imaging system installed in early 1997. This system had previously required a proprietary printing system that Davison says would have been very expensive to purchase.

"We didn't want another (printing) technology here, so we assisted our vendor in using AFP," he explained. "One of the issues you have with a document

imaging system is that printing is so intense. There is a lot of data on an imaged report. What was needed was a compressed printer stream with Intelligent Printer Data Stream™ (IPDS™). We were able to use AFP because it is, by design, compressed. The company had not done that prior to coming here. We were able to help them with that implementation."

How have IBM printers performed? "Basically, they're very good," the I/S manager affirmed. "We've run into a few problems, especially in the beginning, in terms of losing configurations. But that's a user problem. It takes a settling-in period to learn how to use them. For example, we're now servicing the printers on a routine basis. We didn't do that initially. Regular servicing has proved beneficial."

"IBM has also helped us quite a bit with the installation," he added. "They came and helped us make the first one work. And they helped us a lot with software versions. This was a learning experience to keep them consistent on the floors, and we had to be very careful. Previously, we had matrix printers that were pretty forgiving. The new printers do so much more that it takes more detailed configuration. We had to be sure they were right."

What's in Valley Health System's technology future? "We're in the pre-stages of installing a new Radiology system, " Davison advises. "We're going to use AFP printers with that because we want the networking capability. We chose AFP so it would be flexible enough to print anything we want to print on it."

Are IBM color printers also in the offing? Davison adds good-naturedly that he is still resisting that temptation, noting: "We've been hesitant because we know how attractive the end products are on those printers. Everyone will want them!"