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A HEALTH SYSTEM MOVES TOWARD PAPERLESS

By **Tabitha Lieberman**, SVP Clinical and Revenue Cycle Applications, Providence St. Joseph Health

We are going paperless! Have you ever heard that proclamation at the start of a new system implementation?

As far back as I remember, large systems like Providence St. Joseph Health, have been removing paper—be it with accounting systems, billing systems, ERP systems or Electronic Medical Records (EMR). And while I still believe the day will come where paper will be scarce, that day is not here yet, and having a robust documentation management strategy is key.

Inside and outside of the EMR, Document Management can take on multiple requirements for differing departments within a health organization. They can also be met with scrutiny, concerning the rules and regulations related to data retention. Because of this, an organization—especially in the health sector—needs a solid, shared understanding about how documents should be used, retained or archived with a strong data governance body.

When searching for a document management platform, understand your organization's current capacity and potential to grow. Storage and network latency are key to ensuring users get millisecond responses when pulling back large document queries or viewing images through a unified viewer or EMR. Having a yearly plan that nets out your archive potential versus new growth is essential.

Almost any document can be stored on a multifaceted document management system. In our health system, it is about more than just software for receiving external faxed results. A good system will accept cold feeds from third-party systems—treatment plans or surgical artifacts with rich text and high-resolution images. They may also extend OCR capabilities to read in financial data for billing or materials inventory. A wise move is resisting the purchase of multiple platforms for different business segments, but rather extending your vendor to do everything.

Integration is key. Work with a vendor that will seamlessly tie your documents into your main systems' workflows. Users should not have to jump from one system to another to get



information. Use of FHIR and web APIs can allow vendors to pass patient aware data and either embed a GUI or open an application directly to exact information needed.

“Having a high-functioning system with a tightly integrated document management system is key to your long term transition towards paperless”

Finally, work closely with your different stakeholders to understand how they use documents, then design the tools and processes to ensure the experience is as seamless as possible. Workflow capabilities is an added benefit that may be able to streamline processes and increase productivity, but also an area that can easily feel cumbersome if not designed properly.

For healthcare organizations wanting to reach HIMSS stage 7, it is mandatory. Letting go of holding on to paper can be hard for many departments. Having a high-functioning system with a tightly integrated document management system is key to your long term transition towards “paperless.” **CR**