Cactus | Provider Management Platform

Web-enabled Applications Transform Hospital's Provider Management Processes

CUSTOMER PROFILE

North Kansas City Hospital is a premier acute care facility and a leading healthcare provider in the Kansas City area.

FACILITY TYPE: Single acute-care facility

LICENSED HOSPITAL BEDS: 451

MEDICAL STAFF: 492

MEDICAL SPECIALTIES: 46

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROFESSIONALS: 145

CACTUS PROVIDER MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

ADDITIONAL MODULES USED

- Application Manager
- Committee Manager
- License Monitor

North Kansas City Hospital's recent adoption of Cactus' next-generation, cloud-based Application Manager, Committee Manager, and License Monitor modules has produced dramatic time savings and provided instant access to secure, accurate data while significantly improving providers' perceptions of NKCH.

Before the hospital's Medical Staff Office started using Cactus from symplr's web-based provider management platform for credentialing, the hospital relied on a legacy, paper-based system.

symplr®

KEY CHALLENGES

1. Incomplete applications resulted in a 4-6 week turnaround time

2. NKCH Medical Staff Office's application processing system was inefficient

3. The paper- and mail-based application processing system was expensive and inefficient

4. NKCH Medical Staff Office spent an inordinate amount of time handling paperwork

5. NKCH's paper-based application process made it difficult for staff to locate records quickly during audits, surveys and reviews

SOLUTION

Cactus Application Manager, Committee Manager, and License Monitor.

BENEFITS

1. Turnaround was reduced to 24-48 hours because Cactus Application Manager accepts only completed applications.

2. NKCH Medical Staff Office improved the efficiency of its application process.

3. NKCH Medical Staff Office members gained an intuitive easy-to-use, time- and cost-efficient, cloud-based, digital system.

4. NKCH staff had more time to focus on value-added tasks.

5. The Cactus system provided instant, anytime, anywhere access to accurate, real-time, secure records and data.

Previously, incomplete applications and a paper- and mail-based process mired 492 providers, 145 Advanced Practice Professionals and three NKCH staff in multiple requests for missing information and never-ending follow-ups while the U.S. Postal Service further slowed turnaround times and increased costs.

In spring 2015, NKCH committed to Application Manager to manage credentialing and privileging for all physicians and APPs, newly hired or seeking reappointment, and to help achieve its goal of becoming a truly paperless office.

Two years later, NKCH has recredentialed all of its physicians and APPs. Additionally, NKCH's application turnaround has dropped to 24-48 hours, and 40% of applications are processed upon receipt, up from the 1% under the paper-based system. Today, just 60% of online applications are returned for corrections, down from 99.9%.

Intuitive and easy-to-use, Application Manager provides internal and external users with immediate access to secure records, which helps earn users' confidence and trust. Instead of NKCH staff keying in data, Application Manager automatically uploads information, which boosts accuracy and saves time while freeing NKCH staff to double- and triple-check the credentialing, licensing, and privileging documentation.

Of course, those benefits are crucial, but in the eyes of Johnna Schindlbeck, coordinator, Medical Staff Services, NKCH, what's even better is the fact providers and APPs can submit only complete applications to NKCH. In addition, because all communication instantaneously takes place online, the need for the U.S. Postal Service and phone, fax, text, and email follow-up communication is virtually eliminated.

"Submitting incomplete applications gave providers and APPs the illusion they were being proactive and helpful but we couldn't start processing an incomplete application, so it further slowed the process and increased frustration and stress levels as deadlines loomed," says Schindlbeck.

In Application Manager, NKCH set certain pre-requisites so the system would not accept incomplete applications. Another Application Manager feature directs applicants to the fields and attachments they've missed and must address to submit it.

"The reduced returns and the almost instant online transmission of documents are massive time savers," says Schindlbeck. "I love the entire Cactus system, but the green 'submit' button that works only if an application is complete is outstanding."

If the submitted application contains incorrect information, requires additional detail, or is missing attachments, NKCH staff uses Cactus tools to highlight certain fields and send it digitally with just a few clicks.

With the paper applications, NKCS staff made every effort to clearly communicate what was required with highlights and notes, before returning it by mail. However, NKCH staff still faced misunderstandings and omissions and had to follow up by phone, text, email and fax.

Days and even weeks passed while the applicant located the documentation, scanned/copied it, put it in an envelope, then addressed, stamped and finally mailed the package. The entire process then started all over again.

"We often had three to five providers with incomplete applications the day before the first committee approval meeting because we averaged two to four weeks of dead time with everyone involved waiting on someone else," says Schindlbeck.

Cactus Modules Streamline Processes

Committee Manager has transformed the review process as much as it has revolutionized applications. Committee Manager streamlines the review process and ensures transparency, which is a bonus when the Joint Commission surveyor visits. For example, Schindlbeck can demonstrate that the credentialing committee's cardiologist did not review an NKCH colleague. It also saves time as reviewers can click "tab to tab" rather than shuffling through paper documents.

The Committee Manager module also offers peace of mind and absolute confidence in the security and integrity of the system and files for review. It tracks and records the user ID of anyone who modifies a file or data as well as the date and time of the modification and whether it's an addition, a change, or even a deletion. Previously, anyone could add a sheet of paper, black out, or change a comment, despite knowing such actions were prohibited.

Meanwhile, the License Monitor module is also a huge time saver for Schindlbeck and her staff because it searches the licensing database(s) and automatically notifies NKCH regarding providers' license renewals, expirations, any changes to licenses and disciplinary actions.

"We're no longer searching for information and chasing providers and their staff," says Schindlbeck. "In our two busiest months, my staff was bogged down for at least a day a month – that's no longer the case."
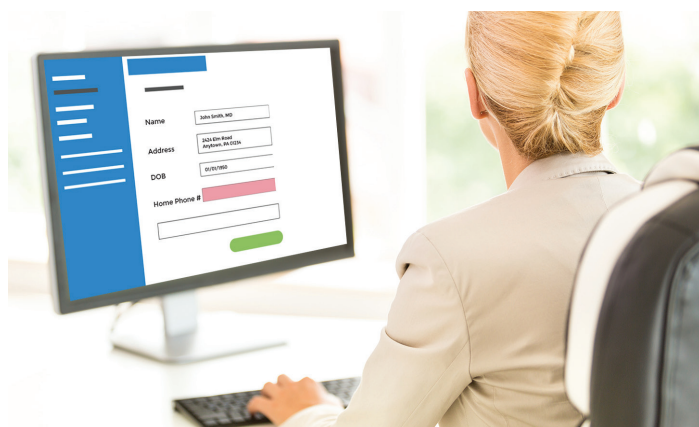
Hospital's Joint Commission Survey Seen as a Success Due to Cactus

Thanks to Application Manager, Committee Manager, and License Monitor, the hospital's recent Joint Commission survey was a great success because Cactus gave Schindlbeck immediate access to the requested digital files, which she shared on flat screens. Schindlbeck was also able to point to and highlight the fields of interest for the surveyor, NKCH director, and executive committee members.

Some of the surveyor's questions included:

Where was Dr. X granted privileges? When did Dr. X last perform this procedure? Who observed it? Was Dr. X's state license verified at the primary source? When did Dr. X complete training on the surgical robot?

"The surveyor was so impressed with how quickly and easily I found the information, he shifted his focus from credentialing to peer review after 15 minutes rather than the usual 60 minutes," says Schindlbeck.

Before using web-based Cactus solutions, Schindlbeck and her staff pulled the files of the physicians to be reviewed by the Joint Commission surveyor and transported them from the storage areas to the meeting rooms in wheeled carts. Schindlbeck and the surveyor sat side by side to review the paper files, while the rest of the participants had to follow along without the visual support.

"Those files represent an individual's entire history and career. Thanks to Cactus and its digital files, security and privacy are no longer a concern," says Schindlbeck, who notes the surveyor also appreciated the on-site and cloud-based Cactus backups of all files. "The surveyor recommends Cactus because an existing, proven tool makes more sense than creating your own from scratch — so we're now considering Cactus Peer Review."

Out of all the vendors that NKCH's IT department regularly uses, its members report that Cactus is the very best at quick, efficient support.

"That's our Medical Staff Department's experience, but to hear it from our IT department, which works with multiple vendors across the entire hospital, really says something positive about Cactus," says Schindlbeck of NKCH's three-decade-long relationship with Cactus. "I feel strongly that Cactus truly is the best available."