INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

HÔPITAL PRIVÉ DE L'ESTUAIRE

IMPROVED ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS

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Private hospital optimises use of premises and boosts efficiency by enabling clinicians to access patient files electronically

CHALLENGE: Merging two hospital sites caused Hôpital Privé de l'Estuaire to review arrangements for medical records storage and access

SOLUTION: Off-site secure storage of paper archives and digitisation of new patient files with data hosted in the cloud

VALUE: Improved access to patient files with full regulatory compliance, enabling more effective use of hospital space for clinical purposes

"Today, the results are positive and we have met our targets. The whole project was completed on schedule and now whenever we need a paper file Iron Mountain is able to deliver it to us in a very reasonable timeframe."

Jean-Luc Raflé
Executive Director
Hôpital Privé de l'Estuaire

CLIENT

The Hôpital Privé de l'Estuaire (HPE) in Le Havre, France, is a subsidiary of the French private hospital group Groupe Général de Santé. Established in 2010 from the merger of two private clinics – Clinique du Petit Colmoulins in Harfleur, and Clinique François 1er in Le Havre – HPE employs around 900 people and operates from a brand new 400-bed building in Le Havre. Its services include general surgery, oncology, maternity, and palliative care.

CHALLENGE

Planning the layout of the new hospital building presented the perfect opportunity to review how space was being used. Jean-Luc Raflé, Executive Director at HPE, recalls: "One of our main objectives was to reserve the maximum amount of space at the new premises for patients and medical staff." It followed that HPE would consider alternative ways of working for any non-clinical services that were taking up valuable hospital space. One of the areas that came under the spotlight was the storage of patient medical records.

HPE appointed an external consultant to help with the review. Like any hospital, a significant archive of paper-based patient files would need to be kept secure and retained for many years yet be readily accessible as required. HPE records had historically been stored on site at the clinics. Jean-Luc Raflé continues: "The project team recommended that we should outsource the storage and management of patient medical files at the new hospital building. The team also proposed that we start the process of digitising new files and store these within an electronic document management system."

SOLUTION

Guided by the consultant, HPE drew up a service specification and issued an invitation to tender to a range of prospective records management vendors. "We chose Iron Mountain because it tabled a compelling offer and it could support us across both the off-site storage and the scanning aspects of the project," confirms Jean-Luc Raflé. Another attraction was that Iron Mountain had a purpose-built secure storage facility in Calvados, near the new hospital site. This would mean that medical files would remain in close proximity and readily accessible.

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The first task was to consolidate the records. Iron Mountain established a project team to work with HPE to manage the transition. The transfer took around one month to complete and involved the transportation of around 2,000 linear metres of files. In consolidating the files, the project team was also able to address a significant problem: inconsistency in the way files were indexed between the two former clinics. To resolve this and preserve traceability, each file was issued with a unique number cross-referenced against the original file designation. Steps were also taken to consolidate files relating to the same individual to prevent any duplication of records. Under the current agreement,

every two weeks Iron Mountain collects around 300 new patient files – each containing typically eight pages of information – to add to the archive.

The second stage of the project was even more complex, because the digitisation of medical files was a new initiative for HPE. It is also heavily regulated by the Agence des Systèmes d'linformation Partagés de Santé (ASIP) under the supervision of the Ministry of Health.

A project team was comprised of representatives from Iron Mountain and the HPE medical information department, as well as doctors, administrators, and the finance director. The team took the standard digitisation process operated by Iron Mountain and made adjustments to adapt it to the specific needs of the hospital. To avoid unnecessary cost, the team also specified which patient documents would be most useful for digital access.

To assure compliance, Iron Mountain chose to work with the IDS (Informatique De Sécurité) which is certified by the government for personal medical data hosting and would host the patient medical data in strict compliance with rules relating to confidentiality and access. This approach was also agreed with the Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) – the agency that audits and certifies personal data security.

"From the user point of view, it makes no difference that the data is hosted at IDS," says Stéphane Benais, IT Manager at Iron Mountain. "The customer still connects via our website and has transparent access to the digital files without the need to change systems."

VALUE

In outsourcing the storage and management of its patient files to Iron Mountain, HPE knows that its records are being stored in a safe and secure environment, while no longer using valuable hospital space. It has also freed its own staff from the burden of managing the paper archive on a daily basis. Any file required can be ordered via a customer portal over the web, for next day or even same day emergency delivery.

"The results are positive and we have met our targets," confirms Jean-Luc Raflé. "The whole project was completed on schedule and now, whenever we need a paper file, Iron Mountain is able to deliver it to us in a very reasonable timeframe."

New patient files are now digitised by Iron Mountain and hosted in the cloud in full compliance with the regulatory standards in France. Authorised staff can access patient files with just three clicks. Early indications suggest that this is improving both efficiency and patient care. However, it is still early days for the project and the process is still evolving. For example, a study is in progress to determine the best way for doctors to access the files for the patients they see on their daily rounds.

A future possibility will be to create a gateway between the Iron Mountain hosted environment and hospital information systems to simplify direct access to the data for medical staff. Commenting on the digitisation project, Jean-Luc Raflé concludes: "Being able to access the medical files electronically is proving to be very valuable for our doctors."

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