

FormFast Plus Quadramed Equals A Seamless Solution

The winters in northwestern Wisconsin are long and hard; but while many of us might simply hibernate and wait for spring, there's something about surviving—even thriving—in such an environment that brings out the best "can do" spirit in Wisconsin's residents. It's the same sort of approach operating at Memorial Medical Center (MMC) of Ashland and Hayward Area Memorial Hospital, two facilities of Regional Enterprises, Inc. Memorial Medical Center is a 100-bed acute care hospital offering a wide range of medical/surgical services and emergency care. Hayward Hospital, a 50-bed facility some forty miles to the southwest, offers hospital and skilled nursing home facilities. Both locations serve counties in rural Wisconsin and Michigan. But don't let geography fool you. These oases of healthcare are employing cutting edge technology to ensure patient safety and quality of care. And **FormFast, Inc.** is helping them achieve their goals.

According to Todd Reynolds, Director of Information Systems and Chief Information Officer at Ashland, Ashland and Hayward wanted to improve their processes for patient safety. Patti Patefield, R.N., Clinical Systems Analyst, and former Director of Nursing at Hayward, adds, "We wanted to give our patients name bands as soon as they walked in the door. And we wanted to have their correct medical information immediately available." As it turned out, addressing these two crucial issues has also yielded time and cost savings at both facilities.

Both hospitals previously utilized a Legacy-based HIS system and "blue cards" to identify patient records. Adds Patefield, "We were spending lots of money on data cards. Adding to that, since we're so remote, it was hard to get service on our machines. We were fixing our machines two or three times a year; and it always seemed that we wasted a significant supply of cards while we were

trying to figure out what the problem was. And those costs really add up: the cards cost more than a whole sheet of name bands." She also explains that stamping charts front and back with blue cards at a busy nurses' station proved to be both time consuming and confusing.

"We went to a much more robust system with Affinity's Quadramed," explains Reynolds. Other improvements followed. Ashland replaced their dot matrix printers and now has laser printers at all nursing stations and workspaces. Adds Patefield, "Here at Hayward, we can afford the technology because we work with Ashland, and REI owns the software that we share. But it's still a stretch.... and change is hard. However, the returns are already coming in."

The FormFast software went live at both facilities in late Spring of 2002, and the results, according to Reynolds, have been better than expected, "It works great," he says. "In fact, I just came back from vacation and one of the first things I did was call and ask for an update on how the FormFast system was working. No one had any complaints. We turn it on, and forget it."

FormFast has not only fulfilled the hospitals' goals for legible, well-designed forms, it also gives them the capability of placing a bar code on each sheet of the patient record. "We use the bar codes for transcription," explains Reynolds. "It allows us to electronically archive records and is helping us manage our documents." He continues, "We wanted legible and easy-to-read forms. We also wanted to save time in printing admissions packets with all the data. And we wanted our pharmacy, lab, HIS, and materials management data to all be usable. We wanted one system that could handle all these demands. And FormFast was our answer."



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FormFast Plus Quadramed Equals **A Seamless Solution** *(continued from other side)*

Adds Patefield, "We wanted to be able to build a patient record and print it at whatever location was necessary. Also, by having this information pre-printed on the form, we're saving time staff previously spent writing items by hand in a chart. FormFast did it."

Reynolds credits his hospital administration with having the vision to employ the Quadramed and FormFast solutions. "We're in a small, rural community and we really feel that we're part of the community we serve. Instead of playing catch-up, we're staying ahead of the game. It's great to see how our systems are helping improve processes for our patients—our neighbors—and it's gratifying to see that they notice the difference too."

Ashland and Hayward prepared a Return-On-Investment study prior to implementing its automated systems. Although Reynolds and Patefield say it's too early to report actual numbers, both are confident of the return they're receiving with the new approach. Says Reynolds, "We've already reduced our accounts receivables to 30 days with our new systems. We're getting paid much more quickly. But it isn't just Affinity or FormFast, or Electronic Document Management alone, it's all these things coming together so seamlessly to help us achieve greater efficiency." Adds Patefield, "We've already saved thousands of dollars in patient medication charges alone. It's easy to show safety improvement and cost savings with this approach."

In addition to the advantages of faster data retrieval and forms on demand, Reynolds points out another advantage to the FormFast approach. "Real estate in a hospital is hard to come by, whether you're talking about storage space or work space. Data cards take up a lot of room. By converting to FormFast, we gained counter space, as well as the area we previously had to dedicate to form storage."

In talking about the transition to FormFast, Reynolds adds, "It's a noticeable change. Our forms are cleaner, easier to read and more professional looking. It's a safety issue and it's a visual improvement. But best of all, we found the change was seamless with FormFast."

Both Reynolds and Patefield enthusiastically support the improvements they've seen with Quadramed and FormFast. Explains Patefield, "We host site visits about once a month for people who are interested in the Quadramed system. It's so easy to show safety improvements and cost savings with this system." Still, she says, some resistance is to be expected. "We had staff who didn't want to learn how to use computers. If people are hesitant, I always remind them: 'Let's not forget what we're here for, or why we're doing this. All of these systems are going to help us keep our patients safe.' We're on a quest for patient safety. And FormFast is **absolutely** part of our quest."

If you'd like more information about **FormFast**,
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