

- Employee satisfaction from the capacity of technology to help clinicians (nurses, technicians, therapists) record their observations (charting) into the clinical systems and have immediate access to their notes and those of others in a format that enhances good clinical decision making
- Clinical data access for all levels of management; in addition to access by the actual caregivers, new clinical technologies allow RHMC management and administration to access summarized and detailed clinical information for the purpose of improving the quality of care being performed as well as reducing costs, where appropriate

RHMC is currently in the process of implementing an enterprise-wide electronic medical records system at both the hospital and its various physician office practices and clinic sites. Also, as will be seen later in this chapter, many projected financial implications for clinical application are favorable as well.

Integrating Data and Reporting to Support Enhanced Decision Making

The second IT strategic initiative—integrating data and reporting to support enhanced decision making—is extremely important to the organization. Without effective reporting and analysis systems, it is not easy for administrators to maintain proper control over their managers or for managers to gain a proper understanding of their department's operations. Turning data into useful information is critical to the financial and clinical health of RHMC. Several areas of decision support allow managers to optimize the resources of their departments at all times; anything less than this type of commitment leads to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and inappropriateness.

Effective Decision Support System Tools and Techniques Needed by the Health Care Organization

- Daily administrative and management dashboards on the computer desktop
- Monthly balanced scorecard of financial, clinical, quality, and satisfaction indicators (metrics)
- Benchmarking
- Flexible budgeting and monitoring
- Labor management
- Nonlabor management
- Service line, physician, and patient-level reporting and analysis.

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- Cost accounting technology
- Contract management technology
- Denials management software (Berger 2007, 63)

RHMC has, in fact, performed due diligence in this area and has selected the top-of-the-line business intelligence system, giving it all of the tools enumerated above as well as the easiest to use end-user interface in the industry. Without a very clean GUI (graphical user interface) the end-user (often referred to as the clinical and operating department manager) is unable to easily access the data to turn it into useful and excellent information. RHMC leadership is pleased to know that several of its competitors have selected systems with much poorer GUIs. Because of this, those competitors will not be able to recognize and understand their outcomes as effectively, giving RHMC the advantage.

Maximizing the IT Infrastructure and Delivery Capabilities

RMHC made a great commitment to improving its infrastructure and delivery capabilities, first during Y2K upgrades thirteen years ago and again over the past one to two years, as part of bringing its infrastructure capabilities up to the current year's state of the art. Thus, over these thirteen years, additional capital was allocated to upgrading the IT capabilities so that the organization could remain competitive with its peers and meet its IT plans. Still, this is an area that is never finished. As technology gets increasingly faster, smaller, and more reliable, the organization's technology infrastructure has to be continually upgraded.

HIPAA Implementation Issues

While contemplating continued IT spending for all these items, RHMC is reminded of the costs it faced to implement a variety of new systems, both computerized and administrative, to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Many parts of the legislation directly affect health care providers, payers, and a variety of vendors with which they do business.

The federal law has five parts:

Title I: Health Insurance Access, Portability, and Renewal

Title II: Preventing Health Care Fraud and Abuse, and Administrative Simplification

Title III: Tax-Related Provisions

Title IV: Gro

Title V: Reve

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