

# Interactant

## Meeting the needs of the most challenging environments

Few people could disagree if Christian Health Care Center (CHCC) were to be described as unique. First, the facility, located in northern New Jersey is more than 100 years old. Second, its mix of services is rather uncommon. Established as an inpatient mental health facility in 1911, it has evolved to offer not only mental health services and outpatient counseling, but skilled nursing care, assisted living, independent senior housing and adult day services for more than 530 patients and residents. Finally, it has established itself as a technology leader, being an early innovator in the implementation of healthcare information management systems and working to stay on the cutting edge.

There were, however, challenges created by both the organization's diverse services and its position as a technology leader. Addressing those challenges triggered changes in CHCC's information management system that not only addressed the organization's issues but created distinct benefits.

### Defining New Objectives in Information Management

According to CHCC's Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Kevin Stagg, the organization's range of services and its early adoption of information management software resulted in a number of disparate databases; a different database, in fact, for each separate program.

"Whether it was our assisted living or our nursing home or our behavioral management unit, it had to be in a separate database," says Stagg, describing the issues with the early-generation software it was using. "We do a lot of physician billing and this is where it became extremely cumbersome. We couldn't transfer info between databases and were not able to employ any efficiencies. We literally had to enter information from one database into another."

"There was a lot of redundancy, manual work going back and forth and obviously re-entering information was error prone," says Jennifer D'Angelo, CHCC's Vice President, Information Services and Information Security Officer. "When

we looked to consolidate and bring things to a more efficient level, we found our software vendor at the time wasn't able to convert their own info. If we were going to start from scratch we needed to look at what else was out there."

According to Stagg, changing their organization's software system required an approach he advises with any major task: you have to have a vision, a strategy and then judge the time and effort to execute.

In terms of the vision Stagg says, "We knew we wanted to create something that had a dashboard capability. We wanted built-in efficiencies - and we wanted to stop using a certain phrase that had become part of our vocabulary in the financial area." The phrase Stagg was referring to was: "work-arounds." He explains that due to the inefficiencies and lack of integration in its software, the financial staff commonly used work-arounds to get their jobs done. The objective was to replace work-arounds with efficiency.

CHCC found a company that provided the enterprise software solution they were looking for. Health Care Software (HCS) of Farmingdale, NJ offered not only its INTERACTANT™ enterprise software, but, according to Stagg & D'Angelo, an experienced, highly knowledgeable consulting partner.

### Transition & Decisions

"It's a big, big undertaking, a tremendous amount of time with the right people at the table. There's a lot of moving parts to the whole process," says Stagg describing the transition to a new financial management system.

"We had been utilizing one technology and iden-



Christian Health Care Center's staff, including Chris Cagnassola, Controller (far left), VP Jennifer D'Angelo (above, center), EVP & CFO Kevin Stagg (back, right) and Cathy Arcamone, Director of Financial Services and Patient Accounting (far right), have found the efficiencies they were looking for with HCS INTERACTANT software.

tifying the inefficiencies," Stagg continued. "We had ideas on how we could make things more efficient but it was all just ideas until we had the right software. That's what HCS INTERACTANT enabled us to do."

Beyond a robust, flexible software system, the HCS team was key to CHCC's success. "They did an analysis of our workflow and acted as a true partner," says D'Angelo, pointing out how HCS listened, suggested and recommended different approaches and solutions.

"Their software can do just about anything and they could have customized it to follow our previous procedures exactly," says Stagg. "But we had to take their direction when they'd say, 'we can do that for you, but approaching it this way is really more of a best practice.'"

They worked with us to identify more efficient processes and customized the software accordingly - as opposed to just duplicating our existing processes.

### Operational and Day-to-Day Benefits

According to D'Angelo, one of the key strong-points of INTERACTANT is the ability to develop interfaces to work with other systems such as their outside payroll service. This flexibility allowed CHCC to look at how things were done and make operational decisions.

"The system allowed the AR department, for example, to look at the workflow for each individual biller," Stagg says. "With our old system because of the separate databases we had one dedicated person to handle each level of service – each program. Now that we are in one database, we were able to reevaluate the workflow of the finance team. Instead of one person doing everything for Long-Term Care, we can say, 'you're doing billing; you're doing collections; you're doing cash posting.'" Stagg explains this enables CHCC to streamline the process and escalate how quickly claims were being sent out, received back, and how the facility was posting cash. "It makes a tremendous difference from a workflow basis and we never could have done that in our old system," he says.

"One of the things that we've found is implementing HCS INTERACTANT decreased the number of days our cash was outstanding," says D'Angelo. "Thanks to their system, we are now doing electronic billing and remittance with certain payers—that's been a big win for us."



Daniel Baez, Applications/Project Coordinator, works with HCS INTERACTANT daily. The software has produced significant improvements in human resources and job satisfaction at CHCC.

From a Human Resources standpoint Stagg says the benefits are also significant.

"We were able to realign certain billers with their strengths. Some billers are natural collectors and we were able to identify those billers and move them toward that. Other billers are better at the back-end work and we were able to have them focus there. I would definitely say that from a quality of work and satisfaction in what they were doing, there is significant improvement."

### Running with Dashboard Plus

One of CHCC's initial objectives was to have a system that provided dashboard capabilities.

"Today, we are on the HCS Dashboard Plus all the time," says Stagg. "We have become very accustomed to running our business with it. We go in from a census standpoint - something we never had the ability to do with any of our other systems. It had been a number of people putting together manual Excel sheets, now everything is system driven in real time. I look at the cumulative census on the 10th, 15th, 20th and at the end of month – at any time I can tell how we're going to do."

HCS President Tom Fahey reinforces the need to stay ahead of the technology curve and optimize efficiency. "The healthcare landscape is changing rapidly, and the organizations who can run more efficiently, and access accurate information will be the ones who are successful," he says.

### Customization and Reporting

D'Angelo, points out that CHCC's unique mix of services is no longer an information system issue, thanks to HCS's customization capability.

"What they are able to do with their system, we've never seen with anyone else: Their customization is unbelievable," she says. "We went in knowing they would be able to handle not only our Long-Term Care side but the Behavioral Health side as well."

D'Angelo adds that HCS really can accommodate any billing scenario, pointing out how as a long term care nursing home, CHCC does considerable physician billing. "This is not a typical scenario for Nursing Homes," she says. "INTERACTANT is able to handle that aspect of their business seamlessly."

D'Angelo also is emphatic about INTERACTANT's reporting.

"The reporting is fantastic," she says. "We are able to create any reports we want within the system. They have some canned reports that are available, but one nice feature that we love is the ability to hook directly up to the database and run a digital report outside the database through other reporting structures like Excel Pivot Tables."

"So that's a very big benefit that we can get down to the raw data, export anything into Excel, manipulate the data however we need to



CHCC team members, including Cathy Arcamone, Director of Financial Services and Patient Accounting, can analyze data in a wide variety of ways with INTERACTANT's customized reporting.

– all without relying on external reporting tools."

### True Partners

D'Angelo and Stagg describe INTERACTANT, HCS's people and their approach with equal levels of enthusiasm.

"The system is scalable, it can be as big or as small as you need it to be; it can fit any level organization with the simplest structure to a very complex structure such as ours," points out D'Angelo. She notes CHCC uses the system for its Nursing Home, Assisted Living, Adult Day Services at 2 different locations, Independent housing - all seamlessly. She also points out it has the capability to handle their Behavioral Health side, as well Materials Management Integration and Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, General Ledger and Fixed Assets - all combined into one in fully integrated system with dashboard capabilities.

From a personal support standpoint, D'Angelo states CHCC is happy not only with the knowledge level of their staff but also with how the HCS team works to keep them up to speed on changes in the financial and regulatory landscape. "From the Medicare side they are very good. They were really on top of the change in the Part B therapy and they were totally on top of MDS 3.0 when that happened, which was a great transition for us because that would have impacted our billing in a major way," she adds.

Overall, D'Angelo and Stagg describe a robust, flexible software system, and a very collaborative effort: a true partnership. "They are absolutely an extension of our staff," concludes D'Angelo.

**"Implementing HCS INTERACTANT decreased the number of days our cash was outstanding."**

Jennifer D'Angelo,  
Vice President, Information Services and Information Security Officer