

## Pacific Hospital of Long Beach receives Cerner Corporation's Performance Excellence Award

By Vicki Aguilar, RHIA  
Health Information Management Director  
Pacific Hospital of Long Beach



Pacific Hospital of Long Beach (PHLB) is a full-service, for-profit, teaching hospital with 184 licensed acute care beds. It is a center of excellence for spine surgery and performs a large amount of orthopedic surgeries. In addition, PHLB has a strong behavioral health and drug rehabilitation program and has been recognized nationally for their innovative infection control processes.

Our hospital recently made the journey from a predominantly paper based workflow to an electronic

medical records system (EMR) with Cerner Corporation, the largest provider of electronic medical systems in the United States. We selected Cerner to improve patient safety and quality of care, increase hospital revenue, and achieve stage one of Meaningful Use within a short time frame. Our small California hospital took on a big challenge as it sought to kick off 35 clinical and financial solutions and interfaces within 12 months.

The advantages of having an electronic medical record are extensive and there are numerous benefits for the patient. The EMR allows the healthcare team to connect the dots and ensure the highest levels of patient safety and quality of care are consistently maintained. They allow for a faster and more efficient diagnosis and treatment for patients in addition to a convenient data trail. Electronically stored information is faster and easier to work with and reduces potential errors. Spending less time on paperwork means having more time to spend with the patients.

This was one of the largest solution implementations in the West

for Cerner. The project involved a multi-disciplinary team of 40 PHLB professionals who worked long hours and many weekends. This team took several trips from Long Beach, California to Cerner's headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri in order to customize and eventually fine tune the EMR system. It was during these trips that the team faced one of their toughest challenges; brainstorming. It was necessary to plan for every possible scenario in order to address them in the new system before the team headed back to Long Beach. Communication was fundamental. Thousands of decisions were made as a group with the goal of delivering defect free solutions to the hospital upon arrival.

Despite the daunting task, the outcome was a complete success, prompting Cerner Corporation to award PHLB with their performance Excellence Award. The hospital and Cerner formed a strong partnership which was demonstrated in the joint objectives for the EMR system, later named PEARL for Patient Electronic Access Records Live. This partnership strengthened throughout the project as the PHLB and Cerner executive leader-

ship consistently met for 2 hours a week to review progress, strategize, and remove barriers. Leadership included CNE, CFO, VP of Facilities, Director of Ancillaries, Director of Clinical Informatics, Director of IT, Cerner Client Results Executive, and Cerner Integration Architect. The solidarity between both leaderships allowed for the project to convert on time with relatively minimal issues post go-live.

Other key success factors included structuring the project as a clinically driven project not an IT project. The CNE and Director of Ancillaries were the project managers and were ultimately responsible for the project. In addition, by staying the course through the use of Cerner's methodology, both PHLB and Cerner teams continually met key deadlines. This led to a predictable time line and outcome. PHLB's PEARL was launched on April 4th 2011.

April 2012 marks the one year anniversary of one of the most challenging activities this hospital has ever embarked on—Project PEARL. PHLB chose the Big Bang implementation approach with 35 different modules, rather than doing the project on a piece by piece basis.

While that decision made for a difficult and stressful year, the toughest challenges have been surpassed. Now, PHLB can continue to refine their new systems through updated design and enhancements.

Finance was amongst the quality, safety, and patient care improvements targeted by this EMR implementation. Title XIII of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides for Medicare and Medicaid payments for those healthcare providers that meet Meaningful Use requirements. In contrast, there will be penalties for those that fail to do so. This financial incentive played an important role in the crucial funding considerations.

Achieving Meaningful Use stage one has proven to be a difficult task for most if not all hospitals that are implementing an EMR system. IVANS Inc., a national health information exchange, announced in a February 2012 press release that while 42 percent of healthcare providers surveyed currently use either electronic medical records systems, 39 percent have no plans yet to implement stage one of meaningful use. The survey was conducted

electronically January 5-12, 2012, and the results represent responses from over 700 healthcare providers from across the United States.

While challenges remain in this new environment, the PHLB and Cerner teams take pride on their accomplishments, made possible by the talent, drive, and professionalism of all those involved. Stage One Meaningful Use has been achieved. PHLB is now better prepared to provide the technology and healthcare that is expected now and will be demanded in the future.

*Vicki Aguilar, RHIA, has worked at Pacific Hospital of Long Beach for twelve years and is currently the Health Information Management Director . She manages twenty-one full time employees and ahs has earned the Accredited Health Information Administrator (RHIA) credentials from the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). She graduated from Cypress College with an Associates of Science Degree in Health Information Technologies and the University of Cincinnati with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Health Science. Vicki is focused on starting her Masters program.*

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