We are seeing stricter implementation of the legislation governing Brazil’s medical sector. The government is monitoring health plan providers even more closely. There is a big push for quality. This all raises costs, so we increasingly need systems that allow us to control these costs.

IVAN VENZO
IT Systems & Business Monitor, Hospital Unimed Nordeste, Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Hospital Unimed Nordeste drives towards becoming a fully paperless institution with single solution provider Agfa HealthCare, to remain a regional reference for excellence.
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Interview with GILBERTO CASSINI, Coordinator Information Technology and Ivan Venzo, IT Systems & Business Monitor — Hospital Unimed Nordeste, Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

By adding fully integrated RIS/PACS to existing HIS and CIS, Brazilian hospital has experienced significant staff efficiency and patient care benefits.

A decade ago, when Hospital Unimed Nordeste was being built in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, management were clear that they wanted a hospital information system (HIS) and clinical information system (CIS) that would deliver the same dynamism and security the new facility would provide for its patients. The hospital turned to Agfa HealthCare both for its technology that fit the facility’s needs, and for its commitment to developing further capabilities as part of a long-term relationship.

With the successful adoption of the HIS/CIS solution, the hospital then chose to integrate Agfa HealthCare’s Enterprise Imaging suite, as well. This solution provides a picture archiving and communication system (PACS), reporting, advanced image processing and integration of clinical information, all in one unified, sophisticated platform.

Now, the hospital will use its fully integrated Agfa HealthCare solutions to help it reach its long-term goal of using information technology to become a totally paperless environment. This project supports the hospital’s strategic plan to retain its top ranking from Brazil’s non-governmental medical National Accreditation Organization, and to remain Caxias do Sul’s reference for excellence in the medical sector.

Adapting to an evolving healthcare environment
Management of Hospital Unimed Nordeste is seeking new ways to further increase efficiency and control costs. “We are seeing stricter implementation of the legislation governing Brazil’s medical sector. The government is monitoring health plan providers even more closely. There is a big push for quality. This all raises costs, so we increasingly need systems that allow us to control these costs,” says Ivan Venzo, the hospital’s IT Systems & Business Monitor.

Thanks to its intense usage of the full suite of options available in the Agfa HealthCare solutions, Hospital Unimed Nordeste has become a key Agfa HealthCare partner for developing its range of solutions for customers. “They joke with us that no one else is as far along as we are in using all of the functionalities that the solutions provide,” smiles Gilberto Cassini, the hospital’s Coordinator of Information Technology.

Part of the hospital’s strategy to address the evolving healthcare environment is to become a totally paperless hospital; implementing the digitalization of patient charts with Agfa HealthCare is the next step.

Towards the fully digitized hospital
That mission has become all the more necessary as Hospital Unimed Nordeste undergoes a major expansion from its current 120 beds to 400. Already over a million records are produced each year in an institution that will shortly triple in size.

GILBERTO CASSINI
Coordinator Information Technology, Hospital Unimed Nordeste, Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
Agfa HealthCare’s HIS/CIS
- Provides significant time savings for medical professionals, and enables easy access to patient medical records and exam results.
- Supports the hospital to move to a fully paperless future, eliminating the space and expense required to store millions of patients’ paper records.
- Hospital’s digitalization enables more efficient management of and greater vigilance over stocks.

Agfa HealthCare’s RIS/PACS
- Delivers workflow efficiencies via a highly intuitive user interface.
- Reduces complexity through the use of a single platform for imaging data.
- Increases consistency and decreases report turnaround time through sectional reporting.
- Allows impressive gains in productivity and optimizes total cost of ownership.
- Scalable to meet the hospitals’ changing imaging needs.

Agfa HealthCare’s contribution
- Agfa HealthCare is supporting the hospital’s complete digitization, which is part of its drive to improve the delivery of patient care, control costs and maintain its position as the region’s hospital of reference.
- The Agfa HealthCare team works with the hospital’s IT staff to enable the smooth introduction of digital patient charts and digital signatures, in order to gain fast buy-in from the medical professionals.
- Agfa HealthCare is committed to building a long-term strategic relationship with the hospital: a major criterion in its selection as single solutions provider.
The project for fully digital patient charts by the end of the year will start with a pilot in one of the six in-patient wings; from there it will roll out to the remaining five in-patient wings and the intensive care unit before spreading to the other departments.

Evolving into a fully digital environment will require significant investments in notebooks, networks and training, but management is confident it will bring major gains. “Going fully digital will save us time and money, and enhance patient safety. Without paper circulating, diagnoses and treatment can be more efficient,” highlights Cassini.

Close coordination to implement the right solutions
A key element to the successful implementation will be close coordination between the hospital and Agfa HealthCare on training. Cassini notes: “A new system requires very strong support for the medical professionals, especially the doctors, who need it to be fast, agile and easy to use. Otherwise, adoption and buy-in will be slow. Agfa HealthCare has looked after us very well during implementation to enable our professionals to adapt to the new system quickly and smoothly.”

Agfa HealthCare’s in-depth understanding of the customer’s unique needs has been built up over the experiences of implementing the HIS/CIS and RIS/PACS. For the latter in particular, Agfa HealthCare made efforts to fit its own working methodology into the customer’s requirements. Overcoming the challenges together has helped further strengthen the relationship.

“We see constant improvement in the relationship with Agfa HealthCare, especially with regards to delivery,” says Cassini. “Now we get new versions ready to implement into production within two weeks. Issues are resolved quickly. And all this means we can collaborate well when Agfa HealthCare is developing a new solution or when we ask for one.”