

## Integrus works with business partner to improve statements and reduce returned mail

Statements that are unclear or confusing to patients are the number one non-clinical complaint in healthcare and often contribute to low levels of patient satisfaction. Many patients receive inconsistent statements, which only adds to the confusion. In addition, hospitals without a clear strategy for patient statements often lose money on returned mail and lost collections.

Best practice hospitals have used a variety of strategies to improve the patient-statement experience, which include modeling the statement after familiar formats like credit card and utility bills, ensuring it does not contain coding or other unfamiliar medical terminology, and including important information like previous balances and due dates.



The benefits of using patient-friendly statements include improving patient satisfaction levels, reducing customer service calls and increasing cash flow.

While some facilities improve patient statements internally, many turn to an outside business partner that can provide additional expertise to busy healthcare executives. In 2005, Integrus Health System in Oklahoma City engaged with Nashville-based LetterLogic to create patient-friendly statements.

Integrus is a 14-hospital health system with 1,559 beds and approximately \$2 billion in gross revenue. In 2005, the health system leadership wanted to make their statements more patient friendly, said Central Business Office Director Bob Golden.

Integrus leadership wanted to create a statement that included a summary of charges, past payments and the patient responsibility, in order to change the tone of the communication.

"It allowed us to change the psychology of what we were doing with the patient," Golden said. "It's kind of a sticker shock at first, when you get a medical bill. You really need to get the detail, to understand what's been paid. Then we wanted to transition the patient into, now my bill is due, if I want to make a payment plan, here's what I'd do."

LetterLogic worked with Golden and his team to design aesthetically pleasing patient statements. Six years later, LetterLogic mails about 70,000 statements each month on behalf of Integrus.

The quality and flexibility are what keep Golden as a customer.

"I've worked with other letter vendors at previous locations. You would send a request, you'd wait for the work to be done, and in many cases you'd be billed for the work," Golden said. "With LetterLogic, they just do it for you and there's no cost associated with it."

Integris uses ViewLogic, a LetterLogic program that gives the business office staff online access to a pdf version of each patient statement. Golden said the pdfs are helpful to the staff when patients call the hospital with a question about a specific statement.

Integris has also improved the process for patient address verification. LetterLogic first runs all the addresses through an advanced U.S. Postal Service verification tool, as well as an enhanced scrubber to catch more difficult addresses. In the end, the address-cleansing tool helps the internal collection process.

"If I can get statements in patient's hands, I've got a chance of making money off of it," Golden said.

In addition, Integris uses LetterLogic's electronic return mail management service, ReturnLogic. Rather than letting the physical returned mail pieces arrive at Integris, the post office creates an electronic file that contains pertinent information and is sent to the facility. The physical letter is then destroyed at the local post office, which saves time for Integris' business office staff.

Golden has seen a 50% reduction in returned mail since the relationship began. Prior to working with LetterLogic, returned mail was about 8% to 10%, and in 2011 it was approximately 4% to 5%.

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Integris has also seen a decrease in the number of patient complaints since the move to LetterLogic, though the health system doesn't track calls specifically related to billing.

Golden said he has stayed with LetterLogic for the smooth working relationship, good customer service and the high-quality product. Most of all, LetterLogic helps Integris market to patients as a modern health system.

"Letters are not all created equal. It used to be as far as a letter vendor was concerned you never even paid any attention to it. That's not the case today," he said. "It's a marketing strategy now."



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