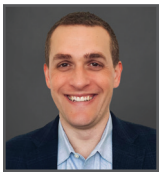


CASE STUDY

CHRISTUS HEALTH EXPANDS USE OF INNOVATIVE RFID PHARMACY TECH

Partners with AmerisourceBergen to automate and standardize pharmacy inventory management across enterprise.



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INTRODUCTION AND INTENDED OUTCOME

Hospital pharmacists have incredibly challenging jobs. Focused on patient care, these dedicated healthcare professionals work fiercely to ensure the safe, effective use and distribution of medications, with their decisions impacting entire hospital ecosystems.

Unfortunately, nationwide healthcare workforce challenges are straining hospital pharmacies which are seeing shortages in entry-level pharmacy technicians, managers, and even front-line pharmacists.¹

With labor at a premium, nearly 90 percent of highly trained pharmacists are now asked to take on the inventory management responsibilities usually performed by technicians,² thus diluting their focus on patient care. Burnout – which can lead to medical errors, reduction in productivity, and increased job turnover – is a major problem, with a 2022 survey³ showing 60 percent of U.S. hospitals reporting shortages of frontline pharmacists and nearly 84 percent working to prevent and mitigate this operationally debilitating issue.

Leading health systems are looking to technology to do more with less, helping pharmacists operate at the top of their license. CHRISTUS Health has long been committed to innovation and was an early adopter of next-generation Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

CHALLENGE

An international, not-for-profit health system made up of more than 600 community hospitals, urgent care centers, and physician clinics, CHRISTUS Health employs nearly 50,000 associates and over 15,000 physicians. The organization is dedicated to elevating the health of the patients they serve – and willing to make investments that enable their staff to focus on that purpose.

CHRISTUS Health decided to invest in RFID as a potential labor-saving pharmacy inventory management solution, choosing a commonly used technology vendor.

CASE STUDY

“*AmerisourceBergen’s medication tray solution is a little more straight forward than [our previous system]. The techs like the system and its simplicity; it’s self-explanatory.*”

Pharmacy Technician

~ CHRISTUS Health –
Shoreline

“We needed a way to achieve maximum pharmacy safety for our patients while at the same time reducing the inventory management burden on our pharmacists so they could focus on essential, patient-facing activities,” said System Director of the Pharmacy Network Operations Division of Clinical Excellence at CHRISTUS Health, Justin Simon, PharmD., MBA

In theory, RFID inventory management technology would enable CHRISTUS Health pharmacists to optimize their medicine inventory in real time, increasing efficiency and decreasing costly mistakes.

In practice, however, they discovered that pharmacy staff were still required to tag medications themselves with RFID labels, negating any added efficiency in their inventory management system. Hiring third party re-packagers to offset the pharmacy labor was deemed not viable due to cost, complexity, and delivery delays that require pharmacies to keep higher inventory on hand.

After utilizing the RFID inventory management technology in nine hospitals, CHRISTUS Health stopped expansion to additional sites, reporting that the labor to tag medications offset the benefits of the system. This left the remaining CHRISTUS Health hospitals reliant on labor-intensive, error-prone processes for managing kits and trays.

SOLUTION

As new solutions came to market, CHRISTUS Health looked to move on from their previous technology vendor, choosing to convert to AmerisourceBergen’s medication tray solution and improve their pharmacy workflow with a cutting-edge RFID inventory management system and pre-tagging services.

With the medication tray solution from AmerisourceBergen, products come pre-tagged, significantly reducing the need for pharmacy staff to manually tag medications. Ordering RFID-enabled products is simple and convenient in AmerisourceBergen’s ABC Order e-commerce platform. Fully complying with RAIN RFID industry standards, these pre-tagged medicines arrive within just two-to-three business days.

RFID-enabled product ordering



Customer feedback drove AmerisourceBergen to reimagine and simplify inventory management for kits and trays. Unlike traditional RFID shielding boxes that take up valuable pharmacy space, the system is comprised of a compact touchscreen kiosk, mini laser printer, and portable handheld scanner for easy scanning, regardless of item size.

CASE STUDY

AmerisourceBergen
has brought leading
RAIN RFID-enabled
inventory management
solutions to the market
for over a decade, with
thousands of connected
devices globally offering
compliance rigor from
cold chain to ambient
pharmaceutical supply
chain tracking.



Scan to learn more or
request a demo.

Demonstrating AmerisourceBergen's commitment to interoperability, the medication tray solution is tag-agnostic, recognizing RFID tags from other technology vendors conforming to the RAIN standard. This allows CHRISTUS Health and other customers unlimited access to pre-tagged medications from manufacturers or 503B vendors. In addition, it allowed CHRISTUS Health to utilize their inventory of self-tagged items from their previous technology system, eliminating the logistical nightmare of locating and collecting previously tagged medicines from multiple locations for re-tagging.

OUTCOME

AmerisourceBergen's medication tray solution provided CHRISTUS Health with a combination of product distribution capabilities and RFID technology expertise to enable pharmacy staff to save valuable time and focus on higher value tasks, eliminating the tagging labor historically associated with conventional kit and tray management systems.

Building on their initial innovation, the medication tray solution team also incorporated feedback from the CHRISTUS Health team to deliver numerous system enhancements.

"The Med Tray team has made it a priority to partner with CHRISTUS Health sites. They have taken all feedback seriously, often building enhancements," said Director of Corporate Pharmacy Services at CHRISTUS Health, Cha Yang, adding, "Overall I'm very pleased with the AB Med Tray team for their professionalism and willingness to listen. Their demos of enhancements have also been very useful and well-received by the CHRISTUS Health users."

Ultimately, the elimination of manual RFID tagging drove CHRISTUS Health to expand their use of the inventory management from nine to 22 hospitals. Standardizing the medication tray solution across their health system minimized the opportunity for error that accompanies variation in medication management. Automating previously manual processes across multiple locations drove increased accuracy and efficiency, reduced the cost and risk of expired medications, and freed up valuable pharmacy resources for high-value activities.

References

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