

Automating the Inbound Fax Referral Process

CUSTOMER

A 100-bed hospital with 1 physician group, 3 urgent care centers, 4 imaging centers, and various affiliated community referrals partners.

CHALLENGE

The hospital receives hundreds of faxes each month from referral providers, including lab requisition orders for various diagnostic tests, each one requires substantial time to capture, review, rename, and file the orders in network folders, where they need to be accessible when the patients arrive for the tests, and to duplicate the orders in the correct patient's electronic health record (EHR).

- **Inefficient Manual Processes:** The referral process was largely manual, causing delays, excessive costs, and a burden on lab staff resulting in over 300 hours per month of manual processing.
- **Lack of Tracking:** Without tracking, referrals could be lost or delayed.
- **Negative Patient Experience:** Patient experience was impacted by the often-lengthy process to locate orders when patients arrived for tests.

OBJECTIVE

To improve the collection, processing, and distribution of electronic fax documents, with particular emphasis on patient lab orders; reduce manual processing and costs; and improve staff and customer experience.

WORKFLOW

To address this operational bottleneck, Konica Minolta consulted with the customer and their EHR provider, Meditech, and implemented our Dispatcher Phoenix Healthcare solution, delivering advanced document and process automation. The workflow automation captures inbound e-faxes received by the customer's fax server and applies intelligent document processing such as rules-based optical character recognition (OCR) to recognize, extract and match patient metadata. The data is then validated against the patient record in the Meditech EHR system to ensure correct matches and prevent duplicate accounts from being created.

The solution also renames and files the orders appropriately for subsequent access. Once the patient checks in for the lab test and the test is documented in Meditech, Dispatcher Phoenix will release the documents and attach them to the appropriate patient record in the EHR, closing the referral and order process. The system also provides staff with an easy means of searching for the orders, expediting the overall process and reducing wait times. Processes were also built to return orders to the referral source when insufficient or invalid data is present, or for new patients without existing accounts.

In summary, it automates order capture, streamlines patient matching and validation, and improves access to the documents.

RESULTS

- **Reduced Referral Processing:** The cost of faxed lab order processing was reduced by 90% annually.
- **Improved Patient/Staff Satisfaction:** Order access time by staff was reduced by 5-14 minutes per patient.
- **Increased Operational Efficiency:** The new workflow streamlined communication across departments, enabling better use of resources and improved care coordination.

SUMMARY

The use case and processing challenges in this example describes a situation that is common across healthcare provider organizations of all sizes and care settings. Although there are certainly automation capabilities within various EHRs, as well as other third-party solutions that tackle specific components within these types of workflow processes, they leave a lot to be desired.

Dispatcher Phoenix provides an effective solution to the long-standing workflow issues of healthcare providers. And because the solution is flexible, the customer is now reviewing other departments and use cases, including referral processing, AR/AP, Mailroom, Procurement, RCM, and others that can leverage the automation in other processes and departments such as referral processing, AR/AP, Mailroom, Procurement, RCM and others.

Konica Minolta is proud to work with our healthcare customers to assist in solving problematic manual workflow, reducing costs, improving security, and most importantly giving staff back more time to devote to patient-centered care.

