

Central Internal Medicine consolidates its output devices and replaces stacks of paper forms and handwriting with an all-electronic forms system that saves time and reduces hardcopy output costs by more than \$40,000 over three years.

Medical practice improves efficiency, cuts costs with Lexmark solution

The Organization

Central Internal Medicine, a successful medical practice located in Lexington, Ky., consists of five participating partners, 23 full-time employees and thousands of patients. To meet the growing demand for its highly regarded services, the practice is in the process of expanding to 7,500 square feet from its current size of 6,000 square feet. Nearly all of the new space will be used by administrative staff to store medical records and meet increasingly complex regulatory requirements for paperwork, including processing forms for private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and HIPAA.

The Challenge

As medical practices expand to meet growing patient and regulatory demands, they rarely do so in a planned manner. Typically, additional shelving for patient records, desks for staff, copiers and printers are put wherever a few square feet of room can be carved out.

Central Internal Medicine is no different. Nearly 200 feet from front to back, its administrative space seemed more suited to a bowling alley than a busy business office whose employees cared for more than 100 patients every day.

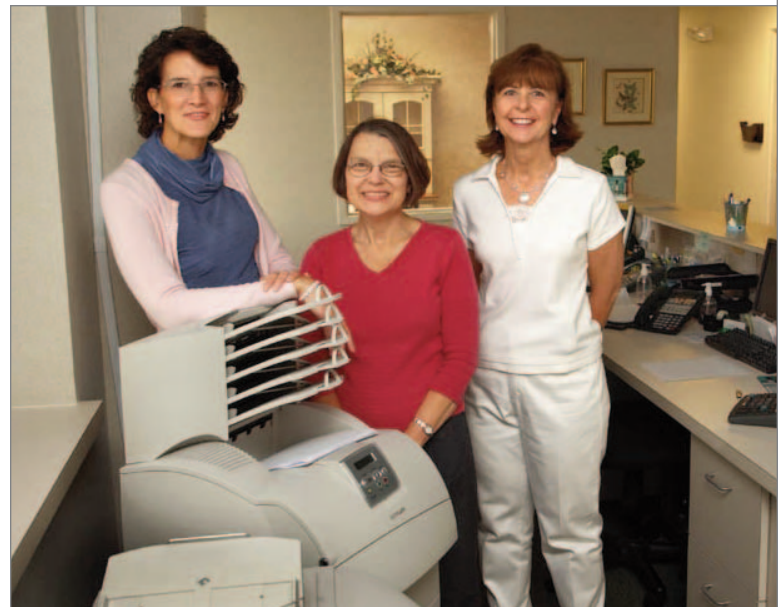
“My staff processes more than 20 different kinds of forms: patient lab letters, referral letters, patient intake forms, physical examination forms, insurance forms, forms for ordering bone density scans, and plenty of others,” said Dr. David Bensema, a partner at Central Internal Medicine. “We outsourced the printing of some of these, especially the patient lab letters, which were on expensive multipart carbonless paper.”

Though it had some forms printed by an outside service bureau, the office sometimes ran out, requiring the copying of blank forms on its copy machine.

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—Dr. David Bensema
Central Internal Medicine
Lexington, Ky.
www.centralinternalmed.com

“With our inventories of blank forms stored wherever we could find a little room, it was difficult to keep track of where they were and how many we had in stock,” said Dr. Bensema. “Sometimes forms didn’t



Employees at Central Internal Medicine are using Lexmark MFPs to reduce costs and streamline paperwork and forms.

get re-ordered quickly enough, so we'd resort to using photocopies and even copies of copies."

Central Internal Medical's paper woes were robbing the practice of efficiency, and the use of an outside printer was growing increasingly expensive. Relying on copied forms with their crooked appearance and poor quality presented an image Dr. Bensema deemed unsuitable. The time had come to find a better way.

"Now, when we receive hospital test results via fax, they are much clearer and more legible than before. This is vital if we need to turn around and refax the document to a specialist. Now we're confident that it can be read on the other end."

—Jena Kennedy
Office Manager
Central Internal Medicine

The Solution

A team of medical industry analysts from Lexmark met with physicians, nurses and administrative staff from Central Internal Medicine to understand how the practice operated. Performing a discovery analysis, the team created an inventory of all output devices in the office and all the medical forms, how they were used and by whom.

Central Internal Medicine was operating seven inkjets, three dot matrix printers and two laser printers. The disparate models were aging, difficult to maintain and all required different consumables which were costly to purchase. In fact, operating these devices was costing the practice about \$30,000 per year.

As a first step, Lexmark recommended that Central Internal Medicine reduce its number and type of devices to just three multifunction printers (MFPs) that could print, copy, fax and scan. Lexmark also recommended that the devices be placed conveniently throughout the facility to maximize employee efficiency.

Lexmark installed three high-performance networked multifunction printers, two near the patient check-in area, and another further back. These replaced the old inkjet and dot matrix printers, copiers and fax

machines that were slow, expensive to run, and whose image quality was unsuitable. With the right hardware in the right locations within the practice, Lexmark could now look at streamlining the forms. A key example was lab forms and patient care forms. "We had to be especially careful to make sure everything was legible when writing lab orders or providing home-care instructions to patients," said Dr. Bensema. "To do this, we eventually resorted to block printing by hand."

Lexmark's analysts calculated that for every 10,000 forms filled out this way, the extra half-minute required to ensure legibility on each form added up to 83 wasted hours, equivalent to more than two 40-hour work weeks.

Based on the Lexmark analysis, outdated form designs were updated, several forms were combined, and others retired entirely. Lexmark engineers built fully digital versions of the forms, forever eliminating the need to maintain inventories or use an outside printing house.

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—Dr. Bensema

Scanning and faxing procedures have improved as well. "Now, when we receive hospital test results via fax, they are much clearer and more legible than before," said Jena Kennedy, Office Manager. "This is vital if we need to turn around and refax the document to a specialist. Now we're confident that it can be read on the other end."

“With the Lexmark’s document feeder, we can scan up to 20 pages at once,” said Caltha MikeSell, Medical Records Manager. “Before, we could scan only a few pages at one time.”

Not to be overlooked, the staff now only needs to stock one set of consumables instead of three or four sets required previously, saving time and storage space.

The Results

Simply consolidating its devices from a variety of inkjets, dot matrix printers and lasers down to just three Lexmark MFPs reduced Central Internal Medicine’s costs over three years by 34 percent. Eliminating preprinted forms and moving to an electronic forms solution increased the hardcopy output savings to about 36 percent, or more than \$40,000.

Medical forms now appear on employees’ computer screens and are filled out online, eliminating handwriting. The result is a crisp, professional-looking document that is produced in less time, conveying a sense of quality that was lacking in the old copier and block-printing days. An improvement in efficiency and the reclamation of valuable office space once used for forms and consumables storage adds to the savings.

“Not only does this look far superior, we get the job done more quickly,” said Dr. Bensema. “I head home a half-hour earlier than I

could before, and that savings is all directly attributable to handling paper less.”

The increased efficiency is evident throughout the practice. “By printing forms on demand, we’ve managed to cut our forms costs by two-thirds,” said Kennedy.

By retiring its inkjet and dot matrix printers along with their expensive ink cartridges and ribbons, the practice is saving hundreds of dollars each month. Using genuine Lexmark toner in its MFPs yields thousands of pages per cartridge and assures top quality and device performance.

“This wasn’t just about forms or paper,” said Dr. Bensema. “Lexmark came in here and took the time to learn about our practice. The analysts spent hours listening to our administrative staff, the people who work with these forms all day long. The level of involvement from Lexmark has been nothing short of remarkable.”

At Central Internal Medicine, the efficiencies gained by consolidating devices and eliminating paper forms became a prescription for a better quality of work life. As it moves onto additional projects, including using Lexmark to scan documents directly into an electronic medical records system, the prognosis at Central Internal Medicine is excellent.