

Palm vein biometrics solution ensures positive patient identification and reduces duplicate medical records

Key facts

Industry: **Healthcare**
Location: **Salt Lake City, UT**
Employees: **14,000**
Beds: **700**
EHR: **Epic**

Challenges

- Duplicate medical records
- Costs associated with duplicate and overlay clean-up
- Ensuring integrity and security of a patient's medical record

Results

- Enhanced the patient experience and patient safety
- Reduced duplicate medical records, as well as the time and cost needed for clean-up
- Reduced medical identity fraud

University of Utah Health is a 700-bed academic healthcare system based in Salt Lake City, Utah. The system provides care to residents of Utah and five surrounding states, an area that encompasses more than 10% of the continental United States.

University of Utah Health supports approximately 1.1 million outpatient visits per year and about 50,000 emergency room visits – numbers that are growing at about 3% annually – which can create opportunities for medical records to be duplicated.

The costs of patient misidentification

Before starting a project that would help with positive patient identification at their health system, the team at University of Utah Health looked at the costs associated with patient misidentification. They quickly learned that it would be hard to get a full picture of those costs, but they were able to measure some direct and indirect costs:

- A master patient index cleanup could cost as much as \$650,000, even ten years ago
- Cost associated with full time equivalents (FTEs) on the health information management (HIM) team to clean up one minor overlay, such as a patient mis-selection resulting in a contact move to the correct patient, is about \$60 per incident
- Cost associated with FTE on the HIM team to clean up a major overlay, one that requires merging or unmerging, starts around \$100 per incident and is often significantly higher
- Directly attributable insurance write-offs cost over \$15,000 per year. Actual write-off costs are higher but are not possible to quantify.

Travis McKee, Senior Application System Analyst at University of Utah Health, explains that not all costs are quantifiable. “We also have to consider the cost of the loss of trust in our institution,” he says. “When you admit someone on the wrong patient record, they can lose faith in the rest of the system and process – and when there’s that loss of trust, we can’t win that back. We knew we needed to fix this.”

“The requirements for implementation were incredibly simple – it was just a SQL server, an application server, and an integration for our Epic EHR. It was one of the easiest installs I’ve ever been a part of.”

-Travis McKee,
Senior Application Systems Analyst,
University of Utah Health

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The solution

University of Utah Health selected Imprivata PatientSecure®, a leading positive patient identification solution for healthcare, to help combat patient misidentification and the costs associated with it. McKee and his team quickly realized that Imprivata PatientSecure was “a natural fit” for their situation.

Once Imprivata PatientSecure was selected, the team at University of Utah Health quickly moved to implement it – it took only three or four months for the solution to be rolled out and to start being used.

“The requirements for implementation were incredibly simple – it was just a SQL server, an application server, and an integration for our Epic EHR,” McKee says. “It was one of the easiest installs I’ve ever been a part of.”

Once implemented, the team at University of Utah Health started using Imprivata PatientSecure to create a 1:1 biometric link between a patient and their medical record using palm vein biometrics. The patient adoption rate has been very high, McKee says, which has further helped University of Utah Health to see a return on their investment.

“With Imprivata PatientSecure, we’ve reduced our duplicate rate and reduced medical identity fraud, which has cut costs, all while improving patient outcomes,” McKee says. “And of course, we’ve increased patient safety.”

Best practices

University of Utah Health was able to reduce duplicate medical records, boost hospital revenue and reduce denied claims, reduce identity fraud, and improve patient safety, quickly and efficiently, with Imprivata PatientSecure. The speed with which they were able to see results was in large part thanks to the early involvement of key groups within the health system.

When deploying Imprivata PatientSecure in a dispersed environment, McKee says, it is key to involve every IT department to ensure that everyone is on the same page about installation. Their early involvement ensures that the implementation process goes smoothly.

“It’s also a good idea to engage marketing, both internal and external, early in the project,” McKee says. When marketing teams are involved from the start, their initiatives can help educate patients and can help in ensuring that they feel comfortable using the technology.

It is just as important to have end user champions who understand, and are excited about, the technology. They will help to get others interested and educated about the benefits of a positive patient identification solution.

“Make sure to identify champions and core strategic groups early,” McKee concludes, “because their involvement really can help ensure a successful implementation.”

