



Sharp HealthCare Automates the Business of Care Systemwide

How the San Diego health system is lowering costs and improving efficiencies through more than 150 automated workflows, benefiting employees and patients alike

Since implementing “The Sharp Experience” improvement initiative some 20 years ago, Sharp HealthCare has been steadily increasing its market share in San Diego every year. Today, Sharp is San Diego County’s largest health system, responsible for approximately one-third of all inpatient discharges. Sharp also boasts the region’s largest private sector workforce, with nearly 20,000 employees across seven hospitals, three affiliated medical groups, numerous urgent care centers and a health plan.

This expansion has generated millions more patient and back-office documents annually, all of which require processing, secure and convenient access, and storage. Software automation enabled Sharp to successfully meet this challenge, yielding multiple benefits across key departments for employees, clinicians and patients.

Sharp Accounts Payable team does more with less

Had it not been for Hyland’s OnBase, Sharp wouldn’t have been able to keep up with the growth without hiring more people, says Anthony Ciccarelli, Sharp’s Manager of Accounts Payable (AP), whose department handles more than 30,000 electronic and paper invoices each month. “This is especially true given our level of interaction with other departments, hospital staff, internal and external auditors, and other outside organizations,” he said.

According to Ciccarelli, they had 23 people in the AP department when he started in 2002, and are now down to 17, a 26% reduction in staffing. “One would expect that number to increase over time as we’ve grown,” he said. “But because of the OnBase automated platform, as well as other efficiencies put in place, we’ve been able to decrease the number of team members needed to handle the load.”

Access to documents whenever and wherever needed

The OnBase platform manages business and clinical content, processes cases and securely stores content in a centralized location, either on-premises or in the cloud. That means documents are available whenever and wherever needed, which is important when your primary service area is larger than the state of Connecticut.



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KARA YU | HIM EHR Documentation Manager | Sharp HealthCare

First introduced at Sharp in 2003, OnBase can be accessed by more than 19,000 users working within 54 departments, both clinical and nonclinical. The software unites content services across the enterprise and integrates that content for use within core system workflows, including electronic health records, enterprise resource planning and other business and clinical applications.

Sharp's use of OnBase is currently tied to 742 patient-related document types, 500 nonpatient-related document types and 155 different workflows, according to Brad Odenkirk, Manager of Document Imaging and Automation for the entire health system.

IT maximizes OnBase flexibility to create customized solutions

“The combination of flexibility within the product and being able to create different solutions that other systems can't replicate – that's been key to our success at Sharp,” Odenkirk said. “We often take information from one system, do some processing on it and then bring it into OnBase. We then bring it into workflows and allow users to take actions on those documents.”

While productivity enhancements through OnBase are readily apparent, Odenkirk said, other improvements, though obvious, are difficult to quantify from a cost-savings perspective. But they are significant, he adds, in an industry where minutes can make a big difference.

Take, for instance, pink-papered Physician Order of Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) forms that outline the wishes of seriously ill and frail

patients. These portable medical orders were problematic for Sharp due to the lack of standardization around their handling. Forms came in from a number of sources and were placed in a patient's paper chart to be eventually scanned – when time permitted – by a member of the Health Information Management (HIM) Department. Until the paper document was manually entered into the system, a patient's wishes might remain unknown to attending physicians.

Now, with OnBase, a POLST form can be scanned at all points of entry and reviewed and released within Sharp's electronic health record (EHR) within minutes. This means clinicians have better patient insight for informed care decisions.

Information, including archived data, found in minutes

Kara Yu, Sharp's HIM EHR Documentation Manager, has been at the organization for 25 years and recalls the laborious documentation process prior to OnBase – including what happened once point-of-care documents were finally processed. Typically, these records were boxed and shipped to a secure facility, taking up office space between transports and time if a paper document stored off-site needed to be retrieved. That is no longer an issue, given that all electronic content – including archived data – can be found in minutes rather than days or longer.

“I love that you no longer need to handle the physical charts, load them into boxes and send them to an archive – that has been wonderful,” Yu said. She also

notes that the extra office space is now occupied by pharmacists, operations and facilities staff and even operating room schedulers. “If you walk in here, it's hard to see it's a HIM department because we now share it with clinicians and other departments,” she noted.

Systemwide efficiencies pay off

A common pain point for health care organizations is the existence of islands of data yet to be integrated within core business and clinical workflows. Health systems handling high volumes of such content increasingly turn to technology to improve their efficiency and output as they convert paper documents into electronic records, which are then incorporated into other systems.

The benefits of an enterprise-level content service solution such as OnBase include:

- Time savings from greater use of electronic content versus cumbersome printing, scanning and filing of paper forms
- Automation of tasks increases work capacity without additional headcount
- Capturing and indexing of patient records that originated outside of Sharp accelerates clinical access within EHR workflow
- Reduced records storage costs
- Prevention of lost revenue from electronic capture of patient signatures on advanced beneficiary notices, which make sure a patient is aware of a procedure or medical item that may not be covered by their insurer
- Enhanced access to medical records to improve coding accuracy and reduce revenue loss



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ANTHONY CICCARELLI | Manager of Accounts Payable | Sharp HealthCare

More than 91 million pages of documents processed in one year

Despite the strides made in almost 20 years of OnBase use, Sharp ran more than 91 million pages of documents through OnBase in the last fiscal year – a byproduct of the organization's continued growth. However, it's a statistic Odenkirk wishes was lower. "It means we're still moving that many pages of documents," he said. "With all the systems and their interoperability, there's still so much paper in the organization."

As a mitigation tool, Sharp uses an electronic forms product called eCapture. This solution eliminates the need for paper forms by capturing a digital version patients sign on a tablet. The form is then stored for secure electronic access within the patient's electronic record.

Additionally, Yu's team recently finished a project to convert paper-based emergency department discharge instructions to one page and incorporated electronic signatures. "That's 51,277 documents we don't have to scan by having patients sign them on an iPad," she pointed out.

Sharp documentation and imaging: looking ahead

Two projects Odenkirk's IT team currently has in process are migrating Hyland's OnBase from on-premises to a private cloud and moving from one EHR vendor to another. Both are significant undertakings given the size and scope of the organization.

Ciccarelli's unit still sees 10% to 15% of invoices come in as hard copies, while 20% to 25% arrive via email. The remaining 65% of invoices flow in electronically. They use a bot to pull invoices out of emails and into OnBase.

Ciccarelli is also considering adding optical character recognition now that the technology shows signs of maturity. It's expected to work with Sharp's chosen financial and human resources management platform currently used in conjunction with OnBase. "Our AP specialists won't need to do as much keying," he explained. "They'll do more reviewing than keying."

Ciccarelli also notes that because of the reduction in time handling invoices, his department can take advantage of even more discounts for early payments, further saving the organization money. "Anyone who doesn't have this kind of system may not realize how much time OnBase will save them," Ciccarelli said. "They'll be able to do more with fewer bodies. It's really a no-brainer."

To learn more, visit
[HylandHealthcare.com](https://hylandhealthcare.com).



About Sharp HealthCare

At Sharp HealthCare, it is our mission to improve the health of everyone we serve. And as San Diego's leading healthcare provider, we're proud to touch the lives of more individuals in our community than any other health care system. Sharp is not for profit, but for people, which means all our resources are dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient-centered care, the latest medical technology, and superior service. And with four acute-care hospitals, three specialty hospitals, three affiliated medical groups and other facilities and services, Sharp makes it easy to get the care you need close to home.



HEALTHCARE

About Hyland Healthcare

Hyland Healthcare provides connected healthcare solutions that harness unstructured content at all corners of the enterprise and link it to core clinical and business applications such as electronic health records (EHR) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Hyland Healthcare offers a full suite of content services and enterprise imaging tools, bringing documents, medical images and other clinically rich data to the healthcare stakeholders that need it most. This comprehensive view of patient information accelerates business processes, streamlines clinical workflows and improves clinical decision making. hylandhealthcare.com

