

Outsourcing IT helps hospital attain key quality honors through clear data structure

Agfa HealthCare's Managed Services relieves staff of time-consuming technical support for improved IT reliability, availability and cost savings

INTERVIEWEE Michael Thoss, CIO



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DRK Kliniken Berlin is a non-profit group of five hospitals that includes a unique geriatric care unit as well as oncology, vascular surgery, and other comprehensive services. Each year, approximately 3,300 staff serve 200,000 hospitalized individuals and outpatients from Germany's capital region. The five facilities and the care unit combined have more than 1,500 beds in 35 medical departments, 26 centers of competence, and three large emergency wards. Selected facilities are teaching hospitals of Charité, the medical school of the Humboldt University. DRK Kliniken Berlin recently outsourced the maintenance and daily support of its Agfa HealthCare RIS/PACS, HIS, and Document Management System (DMS)*, as well as the technical infrastructure that sustains them, to Agfa HealthCare to ensure optimum IT availability and transparent cost.

DEFINED WORKFLOWS AND TRANSPARENT INFORMATION ARE KEY QUALITY ENABLERS

Excellent quality and a broad portfolio of medical services, combined with a highly patient-centric organization, make DRK Kliniken Berlin a model provider of care. The hospital group has for years pursued and attained numerous outstanding quality certifications including the European Foundation for Quality Management as well as a 'pain-free hospital' designation from the German Association for Qualified Pain Therapy.

DRK Kliniken Berlin's many competence centers are oriented to specific quality goals for mammography, oncology, vascular surgery and others. The group is among the few German healthcare providers certified under the stringent requirements of the Joint Commission International, a U.S.-based independent accreditor and quality overseer. Digital information

management using Agfa HealthCare solutions plays an important role in achieving these certifications because it supports defined workflows, fosters transparency and a clear structure of patient information.

As a result, IT plays an ever-essential role in today's healthcare environment. "Asked what they would do without daily IT support of the many technologies they count on, hospital staff reply they would no longer be able to work because necessary information would not be available," says Michael Thoss, DRK Kliniken Berlin's CIO.

This commitment to IT goes back to 1995 when the group sought a comprehensive redesign of all information management and care processes. The market was analyzed and a vendor chosen because of its dynamic and motivated team and modern end-to-end solution. The selection has proven extremely worthwhile to this day.



UNIFIED SOLUTION FROM SINGLE SOURCE SUPPORTS FULL INTEGRATION PATH

The initial choice involved Agfa HealthCare's ORBIS* Information Management System which more than met DRK Kliniken Berlin's expectations. The hospital later upgraded to the company's RIS, IMPAX PACS, and a DMS. Clinical departments soon received support for their workflows from these solutions through the HIS.

Says Michael Thoss, "Other vendors combine separate components from various sources. But Agfa HealthCare systems are a complete, unified solution supporting a full integration path even though they have independent HIS, RIS and PACS functions. Furthermore, their process support is outstanding. The combined solution is a key enabler for decisions by the group regarding clinical strategies."

He adds quality is greatly enhanced by these solutions which make patient information available to everybody in the care process no matter where they are, which is a great plus.

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OUTSOURCING MANAGED SERVICES FOR IT PROVIDES MANY COST AND STAFF EFFICIENCY BENEFITS

Information continuity and availability are paramount, says Michael Thoss. In realizing this, the group recently carved out a new business model with Agfa HealthCare. "We decided to discontinue maintaining the HIS, RIS/PACS, and DMS on our own and contract these services to Agfa HealthCare. Outsourcing the management of the various solutions, as well as the technical infrastructure that supports them including maintenance, updates, and technical assistance, laid the foundation for what is today called Agfa HealthCare Managed Services," he explains. "In 2005, we were their first corporate customer to opt for full outsourcing. Last year, we renewed that contract through 2018."

Managed Services contracts from Agfa HealthCare, based on the company's dedicated software solutions and a clinical infrastructure platform, offer a scalable set of options fitting customers' needs. Choices range from remote management to managed hosting in data centers on- or off-site. Customers benefit by having the latest tools and technology at their disposal; they enjoy peace of mind and increased productivity which means more time for staff to spend on core, patient care processes. Agfa HealthCare's cloud-based services help safeguard a higher level of availability than an in-house solution and help reduce cost, according to the CIO. "We have experienced a very positive relationship with Agfa HealthCare over the years, and all activities with them turned out to be successful."

FEWER IT CHORES MEANS MORE TIME TO PERFECT QUALITY PATIENT CARE

One significant result is freeing the group's internal IT professionals to focus on optimizing services and customizing

solutions versus handling daily trouble-shooting or routine IT tasks. "Out of 28 staff handling IT and communication technology, eight are now directly involved as highly qualified end-user consultants for ORBIS. The rest pursue other more meaningful activities, such as a qualified first level support hotline, related to our overall quality goals," Michael Thoss says.

He also underlines the major strengths of Agfa HealthCare's complete product portfolio that supports end-to-end administrative, diagnostic, therapeutic, and nursing processes, campus-wide. "This, and not the use of highly dedicated isolated solutions, is the only way to achieve optimization and return on investment." •



AGFA HEALTHCARE'S CONTRIBUTION

- » Allow customer to react in a flexible manner to changing user demands, and to calculate costs reliably for providing the desktop.
- » Reduced risk of staff shortages while ensuring 24/7 operation.

DID YOU KNOW...

- » DRK Kliniken Berlin's 'pain-free hospital' certification ensures no patient shall fear pain in preparation of, during or after required treatment.
- » DRK Kliniken Berlin combines 150 years of tradition with high-tech medicine at the top level.
- » Centers of Excellence include hip resurfacing as well as specialty facilities for breast, lung, bowel and pediatric urology among others.

SOLUTIONS

Agfa HealthCare's Managed Services

- » IT resources are at a fixed rate per desktop and a defined Service Level Agreement (SLA) includes 24/7 operation.
- » Extensive operational knowledge is no longer needed by hospital staff to run/maintain a complex IT infrastructure.

ORBIS Information Management System IMPAX RIS/PACS and DMS