



SUCCESS STORY

Allscripts' Pocket PC-based Solution Delivers Healthy Dose of Efficiency to Hawaii Medical Service Association

HAWAII MEDICAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION, THE STATE'S LARGEST HEALTH CARE PROVIDER, TURNED TO ALLSCRIPTS HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS, A MICROSOFT SOLUTION PROVIDER, TO REDUCE PHARMACY EXPENSES AND MEDICATION ERRORS WHILE PROVIDING DOCTORS WITH INFORMATION THEY NEED TO MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS FOR THEIR PATIENTS.

OVERVIEW

The combined factors of cost, complexity, and competition that characterize the U.S. health care industry provide a powerful incentive for care providers to find ways of keeping expenses under control while continually improving services to consumers. For large health care organizations, a significant line item is prescription medications and, more specifically, the cost of brand-name versus generic drugs.

SITUATION

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) typifies the struggle of health care organizations as they wrestle with costs while trying to provide great service to patients. An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, HMSA is the largest provider of health care coverage in the state of Hawaii. As part of its ongoing efforts to improve its financial picture while improving services for both doctors and patients, the organization sent out a request to information technology solution providers for an automated handheld solution that would help physicians with the process of prescribing the correct and most cost-efficient medications.

SOLUTION

After interviewing several vendors, HMSA chose Allscripts and its TouchWorks Rx+ solution, an electronic prescribing application that runs exclusively on Microsoft® Windows® Powered Pocket PC devices. TouchWorks connects wirelessly to server-based applications that run exclusively on Microsoft Windows 2000 and Windows XP operating systems and use SQL Server as their main application database. With TouchWorks Rx+ on their mobile devices, physicians are able to generate legible prescriptions and transmit them electronically to pharmacies while viewing the full range of drug options for each patient's particular needs. The solution also enables physicians to view precautions that may be related to allergies and other problems, view the availability of less expensive generic drugs for the prescription, and determine whether or not a drug is covered by the patient's insurance plan, Bob Nickel, Senior Vice President of HMSA, says Allscripts—a Microsoft Mobile Solution Partner—was able to provide the right technology for what the health organization needed.



Solution Overview

INDUSTRY

Health care

CUSTOMER PROFILE

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) is Hawaii's largest provider of health care coverage, with nearly 2,000 participating physicians.

SITUATION

HMSA wanted to help physicians identify opportunities to prescribe generic drugs as an alternative to more costly brand name medications in order to help reduce pharmacy benefit costs. In addition, HMSA sought a way to improve the level of patient safety and practice efficiency among its providers.

SOLUTION

HMSA chose Allscripts TouchWorks Rx+ software, a Microsoft® Windows® Powered Pocket PC solution that enables physicians to prescribe medications electronically from a convenient handheld Pocket PC device. It displays icons during the prescribing process that represent the formulary status of various medications and automatically checks drug-drug and drug-to-disease interactions that helps physicians consider both the clinical picture and the economics of their prescribing decisions. It also helps reduce the risk of medication errors resulting from handwriting interpretation by routing prescriptions electronically to the pharmacy.

MICROSOFT SOFTWARE USED

- Windows XP and Windows 2000
- SQL Server™ 2000

Microsoft Mobile Solution Partner
Allscripts Healthcare Solutions
www.allscripts.com

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After deploying TouchWorks Rx+ on Pocket PC devices, HMSA observed about a 15 percent increase in the use of generic drugs by physicians—a switch that delivers cost savings to the health care organization.



“Physicians have experienced increased productivity using the TouchWorks Rx+ system, and we believe the application has increased patient safety as well,” says Nickel. “HMSA seeks to advance the level of medical care and services available to our members and contain costs. We actively seek long-term agreements like our partnership with Allscripts that can help us realize these goals.”

POCKET PC-GENERATED PRESCRIPTIONS CUT ERRORS, IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

HMSA conducted an 18-month pilot test of the TouchWorks Rx+ solution in summer 2000 with more than 150 affiliated physicians. HMSA evaluated the ability of the solution to generate measurable cost savings through appropriate use of generic medications and increased formulary compliance. Upon conclusion of the pilot period, HMSA authorized distribution of TouchWorks to the remainder of the participating physicians, focusing on 500 identified physicians they were seeking to help. Dr. Thomas Au, a HMSA participating physician who practices internal medicine at Kuakini Hospital in Honolulu, says his use of the Allscripts solution resulted in an increase in the accuracy of prescriptions sent to pharmacies and about a 50 percent drop in the number of calls to his office staff for clarifications on prescriptions—allowing the staff to redirect resources to other tasks.

Roy Yamauchi, HMSA’s Manager of Pharmacy Benefit, adds that HMSA observed about a 15 percent increase in the use of generic drugs by physicians, which generates substantial cost savings for the organization.

“When we contracted with Allscripts, we believed that this technology would help decrease medical errors while adding efficiencies for both physicians and pharmacies,” he says. “TouchWorks has accomplished both of those goals. At the same time, it’s bringing a degree of integration into our health care services that makes us more competitive with other health care organizations.”

KEEPING AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

Yamauchi says that a key factor in the evaluation process was the long-term viability of the solution. HMSA decided that Allscripts could provide that capability.

“We introduced the first wireless ‘e-prescribing’ solution in 1998, known then as TouchScript, and now deliver e-prescribing and our other mobile and modular solutions known as TouchWorks exclusively on iPAQ Pocket PC devices,” says Allscripts Vice President of Strategic Alliances, Steven Schwartz. “Our solutions perform mission-critical work in health care that requires robust, reliable connectivity and seamless integration with our enterprise applications—all of which run on the Microsoft platform. The Microsoft platform—and particularly Microsoft eMbedded Visual C++® 3.0—allows us to develop applications that can run on a variety of devices and form factors.”

“Currently, other PDA devices do not support the multiple connectivity options required for our solutions, and they don’t support the voice capture and multimedia capabilities that are required for physicians to use our dictation solutions,” Schwartz continues. “Our choice to develop on the Microsoft platform has enabled us to maintain our competitive advantage in the market and continue to push the envelope ahead of the nearest competition.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (800) 563-9048. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. More information is available at the following Web sites:

- Microsoft Windows Power Mobile Devices in the Enterprise <http://www.microsoft.com/mobile/enterprise/default.asp>
- Allscripts <http://www.allscripts.com>
- Hawaii Medical Service Association <http://www.hmsa.com>

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