



Zulekha Group takes patient care to the next level with BlackBerry solution

Zulekha Healthcare Group is one of the leading private healthcare providers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) a region, involving the six Arab states of the Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). The Group's first hospital, a modest 30-bed facility, was opened in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1992 and today it has two hospitals and three medical centres in Dubai and Sharjah. With 125 specialists and 300 paramedical staff, it provides high-quality medical care in over 30 medical disciplines. Zulekha Hospital was recently awarded the 2008 Dubai Quality Appreciation Programme for Excellence in Healthcare.

In recognition of the safety and quality of its healthcare, Zulekha Hospitals Dubai and Sharjah received accreditation in 2008 from the Joint Commission International (JCI), the largest American not-for-profit standardization body focused on improving the safety of patient care through the provision of accreditation and certification services. JCI accreditation is considered to be the "gold standard" for healthcare performance; it is so demanding that only 220 healthcare organisations in 33 countries have been accredited by JCI.

The Challenge

Many of the quality criteria used in JCI accreditation are based on patient safety levels, from patient admission to discharge. One of the key performance indicators is responsiveness to customer requests and issues. Consequently, the Zulekha's IT department needed to find a way to improve communication among staff at the hospitals and reduce the time it took to resolve patient matters.

Benefits

Enhanced operational smoothness

Improved customer service

Faster patient response times

Better organizational coordination

The Solution

After researching the market, Aliasgar Bohari, Deputy Director of IT at Zulekha Hospitals, and his team deployed the BlackBerry® solution. "We were very aware of how BlackBerry worked and its advantages, so we went directly to a full roll out," says Bohari. "Our first objective was to provide staff email and to improve their productivity. We started with management." Zulekha installed BlackBerry® Enterprise Server for Microsoft Exchange and deployed a mix of BlackBerry® smartphones to 30 key managers. The devices were used mainly for email and voice communications as well as web browsing, calendar and contacts.

BlackBerry smartphone were assigned to highly mobile managers, who split their time between all five facilities and travelling around the UAE. They are either members of the management team in charge of running the different facilities or the customer service staff, who deal directly with patient entries and feedback.

User reaction has been very positive. "The users have liked BlackBerry and has enhanced their productivity," says Bohari. Each new BlackBerry smartphone user received special training, which helped them get the most out of the device from day one. "It's also very user friendly, especially the push email functionality" he adds.

The Benefits

According to Bohari, the BlackBerry has delivered several advantages. The first is that it has "helped us increase customer 'time for care' by reducing response times and expanding operating hours." For example, when a patient makes an appointment online via the hospital's website, a request is sent immediately to the customer relations manager. "From the BlackBerry the manager can set up the appointment with the hospital and confirm the date and time to the patient by email," even if the request is received outside of office hours. Similarly, the BlackBerry solution is used to speed up response to patient complaints and feedback.

The BlackBerry solution is also helping Zulekha Hospitals maintain their JCI accreditation, and Bohari believes that it has increased productivity. "Wasting time returning to their office to check their emails is a thing of the past. Now they correspond using their BlackBerry smartphones from wherever they are," says Bohari. He adds that users have become so accustomed to the BlackBerry solution that "now, if they don't receive any email during the day they complain to the IT department!"

Based on the success of the initial BlackBerry deployment, Zulekha Group is investigating on how else to utilise this solution to improve patient care. He wants to give doctors mobile access to key features of the hospital's information system using the BlackBerry solution. "Our next project is to see how we can integrate our hospital information system with the BlackBerry and see what kinds of healthcare applications we can use on the BlackBerry. Because as always, every innovation at the Zulekha Group is focused on our patient, because their care is our primary concern'.

www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies

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