

Ashe Memorial Hospital

Jefferson, North Carolina



Rapid physician adoption of CPOE system sets community hospital on a path to receive Stage 1 meaningful use incentive payments in 2011

About Ashe Memorial Hospital

Established in 1941, Ashe Memorial Hospital is a not-for-profit hospital located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the northwestern corner of North Carolina. Ashe Memorial is a rural hospital that has a remarkably sophisticated level of care for a county population of just over 25,000. The hospital is licensed for 25 acute care beds, and also operates an adjacent 60-bed nursing home. Ashe Memorial has 14 active physicians, five licensed independent practitioners, 10 courtesy medical staff members and a total clinical staff of 122. It uses MEDITECH Magic as its back-end HIS.

Ashe Memorial's partnership with PatientKeeper: How it began

Ashe Memorial's administration assembled a project team to identify and implement computer technology in service to its primary mission – patient safety and satisfaction – that would be funded by federal ARRA/HITECH incentive dollars.

“We were looking at what it was going to take for us to achieve meaningful use,” Ashe Memorial's CEO R.D. Williams says. “CPOE was the cornerstone of that effort. It was critical that the government incentives assist with payment for the implementation of an electronic health record at our hospital, in order for us to participate in the program at all.”

But deploying technology that would qualify Ashe Memorial for federal stimulus money wasn't the only criteria Williams and his team looked at.

“We identified applications and vendors that would help us leverage the existing investment that we had in information technology,” Williams says. “It was really not an option for us to start over.”

Ashe Memorial was introduced to PatientKeeper at the MUSE conference in June, 2010, the annual gathering of MEDITECH system users. PatientKeeper specializes in physician healthcare information systems (p-HCIS), and has 30,000 physician users nationwide, the majority at community hospitals.

In initial meetings and demonstrations, Ashe Memorial's project team – comprising the CNO, the IT manager, and a clinical informatics expert – was impressed with PatientKeeper's range of physician-friendly applications, the software's ease of use, and

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Benefits of PatientKeeper CPOE at Ashe Memorial

- Speeds the ordering process for physicians
- Supports nursing and pharmacy workflows
- “Order sets” and “alerts” can be customized to each physician
- Integrates with existing MEDITECH Magic system

its technical flexibility. Then Ashe Memorial’s physicians saw PatientKeeper, and the response was immediate: We need this! The decision to purchase a complete physician workflow automation system – including the *PatientKeeper Physician Portal™*, which provides a comprehensive view of clinical data from any web browser; *PatientKeeper Mobile Clinical Results™*, which lets doctors access clinical data from smartphones and iPads; *PatientKeeper CPOE™*; and *PatientKeeper NoteWriter™*, which reduces the time it takes for physicians to write clinical notes – was finalized shortly thereafter.

“One of the major advantages of PatientKeeper was that we didn’t have to rebuild our existing MEDITECH Magic HIS,” says Sara Houser, CNO at Ashe Memorial and a co-leader of the hospital’s CPOE project team. “We were trying to keep what we had in place and add to it, not start over.”

Also, it was imperative that the technology didn’t drive clinicians’ workflow, but rather supported it. In short, Houser placed a premium on technology that physicians would embrace.

“One of the reasons we chose PatientKeeper after an exhaustive search was because they were able to offer a product that the providers felt could be customized to their needs,” says Williams.

“For example, we thought it would be very important to ensure that our physicians did not suffer ‘alert fatigue’ when they used CPOE,” says Houser. “We wanted them to be able to stop when they needed to stop, but not have to stop every time they entered an order.”

Previous attempts to get Ashe Memorial’s clinicians to use computer technology had been a dismal failure, as there was no buy-in from the staff. But in the CPOE evaluation and selection process, physicians, nurses and others on the team felt the PatientKeeper solution was versatile enough to address their various requirements.

“One of the advantages of the PatientKeeper product is that individual physicians can tweak it to meet their needs,” says Dr. Kevin Kurtz, an Ashe-affiliated physician who runs a family medicine practice in Jefferson, North Carolina.

The option to implement a CPOE system incrementally also was a priority for Ashe Memorial.

“With PatientKeeper, it did not have to be an all-or-nothing deployment,” Houser says. “We were able to have a phased roll-out so that we could ensure the product was working well for those physicians that used it initially, and then expand to the broader community. We had physicians *requesting* to start using PatientKeeper.”

Transforming Ashe Memorial’s vision into reality:

From zero to CPOE in 90 days

PatientKeeper’s professional services team arrived at Ashe Memorial on Nov. 22, 2010 to initiate a “best practices” implementation process at the hospital. PatientKeeper worked in close collaboration with a dedicated team at the hospital, including the CPOE project leadership group, its physicians, pharmacy team and other clinical staff. Within 45 days, the PatientKeeper Physician Portal was providing Ashe Memorial’s clinical staff easy, web-based access to patients’ clinical records stored in the hospital’s MEDITECH Magic HIS.

Dr. Edward Miller, who has practiced general medicine at Ashe Memorial for 45 years, is one of the physicians using the PatientKeeper portal. “I’m using PatientKeeper pretty routinely when I make rounds,” he says, “and particularly at home at night and weekends to keep up with what’s going on at the hospital.”

Dr. Kurtz also was an early user of the PatientKeeper Physician Portal. “I found it was actually quite convenient to have the iPad at my desk because we have a wireless network in our office,” he says. “I was able to pull up the information and go ahead and dictate the history and physical from the office.”

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-Sara Houser, CNO

To get PatientKeeper CPOE ready for launch, the implementation team worked with Ashe Memorial’s physicians to build their order sets into the new system. PatientKeeper CPOE takes a novel and flexible approach to order sets, which can be customized to each physician. Ashe Memorial began with their existing paper order sets, and put the most popular ones into PatientKeeper CPOE first, to jump-start the new system. The result was a collection of physician-friendly order sets that works with physicians’ current workflow.

“Now that I’m used to it, I think I can enter orders quicker in PatientKeeper than I could hand-writing them before.”

-C.B. Jones, Emergency Room PA

In addition, PatientKeeper gives Ashe Memorial physicians the ability to link to clinical evidence references supporting best practice.

Physician productivity is further enhanced in PatientKeeper CPOE by the ability to create customizable order “favorites” lists for each user. “You can have your most common diagnoses and medications available with a single click,” says C.B. Jones, a physician assistant in the Ashe Memorial Emergency Room. “I feel like that is very helpful in speeding up the ordering process. In fact, now that I’m used to it, I think I can enter orders quicker in PatientKeeper than I could hand-writing them before.”

Dr. Miller comments, “You can look up your labs and your orders and have all of them on the screen – and you can see how your current orders compare to previous ones.”

Less than 90 days after the project began, PatientKeeper CPOE “went live” at Ashe Memorial. Since then, orders have flowed smoothly through the new system, and Ashe Memorial’s physicians and nurses are delighted with how easy the transition has been.

“The nurses have been very receptive to it,” says Diana McClure, RN, Ashe Memorial’s Clinical Informatics Specialist. “They’re especially excited about being able to read the physicians’ orders!”

“With PatientKeeper, the workflow has improved a whole lot,” says Pharmacy IT Specialist Sharlene Lambert. Because the orders are clear when they arrive electronically in the pharmacy’s document management system, she says, “There are fewer calls to the floor interrupting the nurses or the doctors.”

Ashe Memorial also has implemented PatientKeeper’s Medication Reconciliation application, with an initial focus on hospital admissions. “As the nurse obtains the medication home list of a patient,” Houser explains, “they can review that list, and from one screen they’re able to accept a medication and order it for the patient’s hospital stay, change that order, or stop it altogether.”

CPOE Selection Rule #1: Involve Your Physicians

- Choose a system that will save physicians time and enable them to focus on patients, not technology
- Create a system that supports, rather than changes, your physicians' workflows
- Engage physicians in the selection process

PatientKeeper as an Overlay on Top of MEDITECH

From an IT perspective, deploying PatientKeeper as an overlay to Ashe Memorial's MEDITECH Magic HIS has gone without a hitch. "One of the things that was appealing with PatientKeeper was they've been there, they've done that," says William Baldwin, Ashe Memorial's IT Manager, referring to the MEDITECH integration. "The interfacing between PatientKeeper and MEDITECH has been great. You can tell they really know MEDITECH inside out.

"It's been a smooth process," Baldwin continues. "It has been a lot of work, of course, but the implementation of it has been fabulous. From starting the building of everything to being live with it in 90 days, kind of sounds like a dream come true."

Toward Stage 1 Meaningful Use and Beyond

"The partnership with PatientKeeper has been exceptional," Houser says. "We were able to bring forth the physician portal in less than six weeks; we had our CPOE up and running within 90 days; and we achieved at least 80 percent physician adoption in the first three months of use."

"Our goal was to demonstrate meaningful use in the first year that the program was in operation," says Williams, Ashe Memorial's CEO.

Today, thanks to PatientKeeper, Ashe Memorial is well on its way to meeting Stage 1 meaningful use objectives, and building the foundation for Stage 2 and beyond.

About PatientKeeper: PatientKeeper® Inc., the leading provider of physician health information systems, enables physicians and hospitals to focus on their patients, not technology, by providing highly intuitive software that streamlines physician workflow to improve productivity and patient care. PatientKeeper's CPOE, physician documentation, HIE and other applications run on desktop and laptop computers and virtually all handheld devices and tablets. PatientKeeper integrates easily with hospitals' existing IT infrastructure to create the most cost-effective solution for driving physician Meaningful Use.

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