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Our Solution Project Profile



Grady Health System, Atlanta, GA

Pneumatic Tube System Increases Efficiency

The Hospital

Located in Atlanta, Georgia, Grady Health System is one of the South's largest public hospital systems. The health system includes Grady Memorial Hospital, Hughes Spalding Children's Hospital, Crestview Health and Rehabilitation Center, The Infectious Disease Center, and nine neighborhood Health Centers throughout metro Atlanta. Grady Memorial, known as "Main Grady" to its resident staff, was established in 1892. It is a 953-bed facility providing medical care to the underserved residents of Georgia's Fulton and Dekalb counties.

Grady's Regional Burn Center is among the nation's largest with 28 beds. The facility has the most comprehensive HIV/AIDS program in the nation and has a nationally-acclaimed tuberculosis control-tracking program. In addition, Grady provides medical training to approximately 25 percent of the physicians in the state of Georgia through its teaching affiliations with Emory University and Morehouse School of Medicine.



The Challenge

Connected by underground tunnels, Grady Health System needed to transport medication and specimens between four buildings: Grady Memorial, the outpatient imaging center, Children's Hospital, and the clinic building. Although considered a part of Grady, the clinic is a separate building and includes O.R. and numerous I.C.U.'s. The pharmacy department within these buildings needed to shorten its turnaround time and expedite the delivery of medication from pharmacy to the patient care areas. The facility's laboratories also needed a way to get specimens to locations faster with fewer personnel while maintaining specimen integrity.



Grady had an antiquated material transport system that was installed in 1956 and a point-to-point system installed in early 1990. According to Mike Lyle, Project Manager, Resourcing Services, "The original system was taken out of service and the later model was not used very much by staff due to problems with the system."

Because the original transport systems were considered unreliable and not used, Grady employed couriers, usually nurses or other medical staff, to transport items. "The Grady complex is very spread out with heavy traffic on elevators," says Diana Lin, Assistant Director, Inpatient Pharmacy. "It took a lot of staff time to move pharmaceuticals or specimens up and down elevators from one location to another."



The Solution

Grady's staff determined that a pneumatic tube system (PTS) would address their need to move items faster and more reliably between each building. "Because Grady is a public hospital, we have a detailed procurement process that we must go through when purchasing a material transport system this large," states Tom Arrendale, Assistant Vice President, Clinical and Professional Services.

Grady Installs Swisslog's TransLogic Pneumatic Tube System

Grady's choice became apparent. Grady Health System chose to install a 60-station Swisslog TransLogic pneumatic tube system with IQ panel controls at each user station.

Designed to operate the TransLogic pneumatic tube system, Swisslog's software optimizes user capabilities; allowing user configurable screens, while providing real-time system information. The software can also be configured for password protection as well as remote system control via a modem. Older pneumatic tube systems can easily be upgraded to use the latest Swisslog TransLogic PTS software and benefit from the latest features.

IQ Panels Allow Grady to Meet Hospital Requirements

IQ Panels are user interface controls. One of Grady's criterion was to give employees access to the system by using a PIN code. The IQ Panel met this requirement allowing user tracking and also gave users the ability to diagnose station problems, utilize one-button dispatching, and provide instant feedback.



“We saved approximately
one million dollars in one year.”

- Mike Lyle, Project Manager

The Results

As a result of the TransLogic system installation with IQ Panels, the staff at Grady can transport items quickly and reliably throughout the medical health center complex. With the PIN code procedure in place, the hospital does approximately 4,000 transactions per day with little to no down time. The use of the system increased by 30 percent within one year.

“We assured our staff during training sessions that we could track who sent the carrier. Each person would be held responsible for carriers sent, and if an error occurred, such as a spill or stuck carrier, the cost of labor to clean it would be charged back to that person’s department,” emphasizes Lyle. “That got their attention and fortunately we have had very few problems,” he adds. “We are pleased with the system... Swisslog was the right choice for us.”



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