

Active Archiving as a Revenue Cycle Solution After a System Migration

Describe what prompted Columbus Regional Healthcare System to choose archiving as a means of collecting outstanding accounts receivable.

There's tremendous pressure on CFOs today to make sure every dollar counts. As a 154-bed not-for-profit organization in Whiteville, NC, Columbus Regional Healthcare System is no exception. We pursue excellence from both a clinical and financial perspective.

Enter a common costly scenario—we transitioned our hospital information system from Paragon® to Cerner Millennium®. Among other changes, this migration left accounts receivable records in our legacy system, Paragon. Those records needed to be retained not only for wind down but also to comply with Medicare requirements. With five months left on our Paragon contract and facing hefty cost increases with a new month-to-month agreement proposed, we needed to act fast to decommission the system yet retain records and collect from patients and payers. We turned to archiving as a solution and contacted Harmony Healthcare IT (Harmony).

A market leader that other organizations in our network had recommended, Harmony was positioned to equip our team for success. We implemented Harmony's active archive solution, HealthData AR Manager™, which allowed us to archive data that spanned eight years.

Talk about your team's experience working with Harmony to keep collections on track.

Our experience with Harmony was very positive, with nothing but good feedback from our staff. Setting up the archive required collaboration on the front end from both parties. First, Harmony worked with us to get the configuration guides in place based on questionnaires. This ensured the archive build would meet our needs. Insurance companies have a prescriptive set of rules to manage aging balances and write off eligibility. Harmony's team worked tirelessly to meet our specifications.

Our challenge was twofold. We wanted the ability to keep running AR ourselves and we wanted to avoid paying what the legacy vendor would charge. Plus, a full billing system wasn't required. With Harmony, we were able to archive detailed account records to meet retention requirements while continuing to collect what insurance companies and patients owed.

What rewards or savings have you seen since the project was executed?

The biggest reward from a logistics perspective was executing this solution in just three months. We were under very tight time constraints. Harmony accelerated the process, removing obstacles to make this possible. That is a testament to the kind of partner they are. They make things happen.

In the same vein, Harmony produced an S-10 Medicare Cost Report going back four years which was outside the scope of the contract. That was a big plus for our CFO. It's a tremendous advantage to have this kind of worksheet at our disposal as CMS has increased the rigor around auditing and can go as far back as seven years when recounting bills. This has a direct effect on recovering lost dollars.

Having a partner that is willing to go the distance to make the implementation a success is a huge selling point, and a primary reason our team was so pleased with Harmony.

Ultimately, the HealthData AR Manager cost was equivalent to about four months of Paragon fees. Had we continued using that system, that monthly cost would have tripled. Not only have we seen a better return on our investment with monthly costs, but we expect to use HealthData AR Manager for more than 10 years to access itemized statements, audit reports and more.

What advice would you share with other organizations looking to wind down AR from legacy systems?

First and foremost, I recommend starting with a clean slate for your new AR. Keeping the old system up and running is an option but can come at a higher price. Thanks to HealthData AR Manager, we were able to



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decommission the legacy system almost seamlessly, while reducing costs of legacy record storage and maintenance.

The second point I would make is to test the solution. It's important to test as you go through the process, but it's especially vital the month leading up to go-live. We used a validation checklist that kept us on track and ensured we ticked all of our boxes. Our validation went smoothly, but I'm glad we planned the time for it.

Finally, make sure you engage the full team. Harmony did a great job of providing training opportunities to ensure all our staff members knew how to use the solution well. Thanks to the intuitive technology and engagement of our team, the go-live and implementation launched successfully.

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