

Lotus Professional Services supports best care practices with shared Knowledge Management System

Overview

How can health care professionals improve their performance, efficiency and medical knowledge? How can they provide the best quality of care to their patients and communities? With the help of Lotus Professional Services, VHA Inc., a U.S. network of community-owned health care organizations and their affiliated physicians, is equipping its members with valuable knowledge and innovative tools to do their jobs better and reduce variation in care practices with an innovative Knowledge Management solution.

Challenge

Founded in 1977, VHA's membership includes more than 1,900 hospitals, health systems and other providers, including some of the leading health care institutions in the United States.

interventions that, as the one previously mentioned, when applied appropriately and in a timely fashion can significantly improve clinical, quality of life, and financial outcomes. This gap between knowledge and practice represents an opportunity for the improvement of patient care.

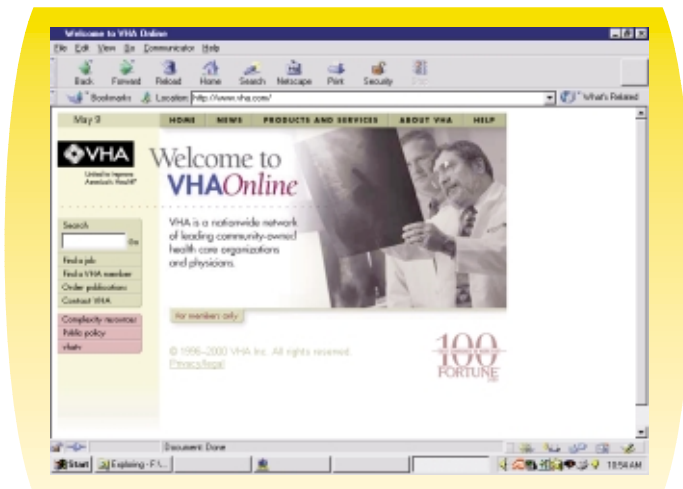
"Our members told us they wanted help with closing the gap, reducing the variation, giving higher clinical excellence so they can reassure their patients," says Stacy Cinatl, Vice-President of Clinical Affairs for VHA.

"Our clients want to make sure they don't reinvent the wheel. They want to collaborate and learn from each other's experiences."

To achieve this, several VHA executives went in search of an easy and cost-effective solution for its members to share clinical knowledge and best practices. VHA's search ended once they discovered that Lotus Professional Services' knowledge management vision and solutions best fit their needs.

"We knew whatever we chose had to be a Web-based solution because we saw the Web as the most cost-effective way to reach a maximum number of users. The Web gives us the perfect vehicle for sharing information, more frequently, at a lower cost," says Cinatl.

VHA is dedicated to reducing clinical variation, the gap between what clinicians know is good clinical practice for a patient's condition and what care a patient actually receives. According to one American study with regard to heart attack patients, there is only an 80 percent chance that those who enter a medical clinic in the U.S. will get the appropriate treatment of beta blockers for their condition. Scientific studies have further identified specific therapeutic

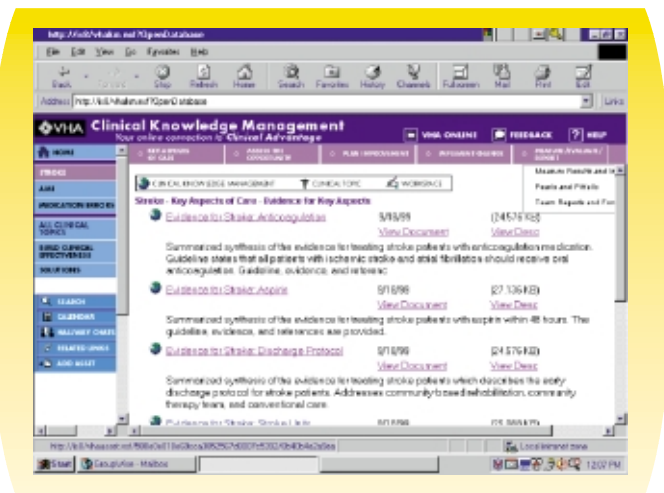


Professional Services

Charlotte McCown, Senior Manager with Lotus Professional Services and a key member of the Lotus team working with VHA, says there are two kinds of knowledge inside every organization: “There’s the formal information we have documented and organized into procedures, put in our databases and incorporated into organizational charts. There is also the ‘tacit’ knowledge, the unspoken, unrecorded knowledge out there.

“Collaboration, which is the business of Lotus Development, is largely about leveraging that tacit knowledge,” says McCown.

The challenge for Lotus Professional Services was to develop a way for VHA members to share and leverage their tacit knowledge and expertise.



Clinical Knowledge Management: A Knowledge-Based Solution

To help VHA, Lotus Professional Services developed the Clinical Knowledge Management (CKM) system. They knew that for the system to be a success, it had to be intuitive, and easy to access and use. The Lotus Professional Services team provided VHA with a working system in less than three months – an impressive accomplishment, considering the team was geographically dispersed and working “virtually” on the project.

With the user-friendly CKM system, VHA members can now search through a repository of authorized clinical information and instructions. They can also take part in informal database discussions called “Hallway Chats” or even volunteer for VHA improvement programs.

The key to the CKM system is its repository – the portal. “This is the place where the rest of the medical team goes for practical methods and ideas, all the literature that surrounds the improvement programs,” says Cinatl.

Hallway Chats provide users with a secure, online environment to meet, brainstorm and collaborate. VHA members can sign up for improvement programs, identifying what clinical issues they want to remedy in their own medical delivery systems. They can form “virtual” development teams or learning communities, where they are encouraged to share strategies, experiences, questions and concerns.

Here’s an example of how CKM might be used to solve a team problem: An emergency resident may want to learn when beta blockers are utilized and when they are contraindicated for patients who have been presented with acute myocardial infarction (AMI). He or she can use CKM to research best practices and the clinical pathways for AMI treatment at other participating medical centers.

The resident has a number of options to find the information. He or she could post a question in a “Hallway Chat” and have a dialogue with colleagues. Knowledge stewards (field experts) monitor the postings, moderate discussion and ensure valuable information is available on the system. Alternatively, the resident can “ask an expert” directly or simply search the CKM system for an answer using a keyword search. These communications provide the resident with the key information needed to ensure the patient receives the highest quality of care and the best possible outcome.

Innovation and responsiveness are two key aspects of VHA’s knowledge management system. CKM enables VHA members to share best practices instantly, ensuring the most efficient method of treatment is spread throughout every member of the cooperative. That way, members reduce variation in treatment and move closer to achieving higher clinical excellence. CKM creates and provides a facilitated process that rapidly networks VHA members, diffuses identified clinical best practices and supports rapid implementation of what is known to work in targeting disease programs. In short, it gives health care professionals access to the information they need, when they need it, so they can solve problems quickly, make better decisions, respond to changing conditions and be assured they’re providing the highest quality of care possible.

Looking ahead, Cinatl believes Lotus Professional Services’ knowledge management vision and solutions are leading the way to a safer and more efficient future for clinical care.

To learn more about VHA, see their Web site at www.vha.com

For more information on Lotus Professional Services’ Knowledge Management Solutions, visit the company’s Web site at www.lotus.com/usa or www.lotus.com/canada

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