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Underground Vaults & Storage's Imaging Services Relieve Records Pain

Client: Surgical Care Associates (SCA)

Challenge: A major challenge in this case included converting paper medical records to electronic images and still having those records available when needed during the conversion process.

Health care professionals face a daunting task when converting paper medical records to electronic images. Records must be readily available during the process, rather than buried in a pile of "waiting to be scanned" boxes. It can be time-consuming and fraught with complications. When finished, confidence on accuracy is of paramount importance.

Louisville, Kentucky-based Surgical Care Associates (SCA) began their document conversion project in-house, using a couple of scanners and part-time help. They began their search for a better option two years later.

Tackling the Inevitable

Initially, SCA's decision to convert paper-based healthcare records centered on two concerns: the world was rapidly moving away from paper documentation, and an upcoming renovation would expand their billing department into their existing six-by-eight-foot medical records room. Patient charts were destined for an offsite storage

facility. "We always kept four years of records on-site so we had a lot of files," said Marcia Hughes, SCA practice manager.

They felt on-site access to active patient charts was a necessity, eliminating off-site imaging as an option. Controlling costs was also important. After researching options, the surgical group hired part-time employees to come into their building at night and scan the files into the practice's new EMR system.

The project took much longer than anticipated. After two years of late night scanning, many boxes of charts lay untouched. Healthcare staff began to discover scan errors including missing pages and physician's notes.

On-Site Solution

Underground Vaults and Storage's (UV&S) imaging service offered a practical solution. After a quality audit where UV&S compared a test batch of images with the physical patient charts, they found errors made by

the previous process were too numerous to economically correct. Instead, UV&S proposed to re-image the entire project and provide 100% quality assurance – within just a few weeks. After soliciting competitive proposals, SCA awarded the project to UV&S. They made a house call, bringing the hardware, software and personnel. UV&S set up workstations in tow rooms in the practice’s office and reinvigorated the project. The patient charts remained in the office until they were imaged. In three weeks the file room was empty. All 140,000 documents had been prepped, imaged, and archived. Three weeks after that, each page had been reviewed and certified 100% accurate with UV&S’ stringent quality assurance measures.

UV&S’ unique system automatically indexed the images with chart ID numbers and patient names. SCA staff, those most familiar with the records, can now add further coding and import the images when a patient makes an appointment.

“Their staff is very professional,” practice manager Hughes said, noting that SCA now stores their records with UV&S until the retention dates are met.

When asked to describe the project performed by UV&S, Hughes said it was “painless” – music to the ears of those in the medical field.

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(UV&S) is very
professional.”**

**-Marcia Hughes,
SCA Practice Manager**

