

On the right track

T-SYSTEM HELPS DOCTORS AND NURSES KEEP BETTER, MORE ACCURATE RECORDS

BY AMBER JONES | STAFF WRITER

Dallas-based T-System, Inc. recently celebrated its 15th anniversary.

It is considered by many as an industry leader in emergency department clinical document solutions. T-System is mainly recognized for its T Sheets, which are paper documents used by physicians and nurses to record the details of patient care, including symptoms and treatment. This simple idea has become a large innovation, with nearly 40 percent of the nation's emergency departments relying on its products.

Dr. Robert Langdon and Dr. Woodrow Gandy, co-founders of T-System, are still surprised this concept wasn't thought of sooner.

"Like a dark horse, it just snuck up and took over the market," Langdon said.

While working at Baylor Hospital as emergency room doctors in the mid-'90s, Langdon and Gandy discovered a universal problem in health care. On a daily basis, doctors encounter many stresses: litigation threats, medical liability risk and complex regulations from the federal government.

Around the same time, the co-founders noticed patient volumes went from 35,000 to 50,000 within a year. That increase meant more time attending to patients.

But they were busy doing something else: documenting. Before T-System, Inc., physicians documented clients' medical records and complaints by hand and memory. This became problematic for multiple reasons. For one, doctors were allocating almost 20 percent of their time to filling out these documents.

"That's taking time away from thinking about the patients' problems, talking with their families, rechecking the patients, examining the patients," Gandy said. "That's really time that has a real cost."

Inaccuracies in documentation also presented challenges. Some-



JAKE DEAN

ALL SYSTEMS GO: Dr. Woodrow Gandy and Dr. Robert Langdon co-founded T-System, based in Dallas, and are working to transition more of their clients to electronic systems from entrenched paper-based systems.

times doctors charted their patients' clinical records hours after they saw them. They relied on their memories and would sometimes forget important information. Gandy and Langdon believed they were spending too much time dictating records and saw a need for a solution.

They created a paper template system, T Sheets, based on patients' chief complaints. This allowed physicians to properly document patient encounters in the emergency department.

"They provided a highly structured environment for documenting the clinical record," Gandy said. "We would have a detailed section for the history, past history, the physical exam, the course of care in emergency department. There were different templates for different complaints. It also allowed physicians to move that processing of documentation to the bedside so it could be done at the same time as the exam."

The benefits of the templates ensure doctors don't overlook patients' diagnostics or mistakenly discharge them. It has substantially improved the care of patients, said Kim Mulder, emergency director of Hunt Regional Medical Center in Greenville. Mulder believes the system has helped save lives.

"It's improved our patient flow and obtaining access to previous

doctor visits; it's definitely improved documentation," Mulder said.

T-System has also experienced some new developments over the years.

In 2010, the company brought in a new CEO, Sunny Sanyal. The company has also migrated from its T Sheets to electronic medical records, known as ED information systems. The electronic systems include the same information found on the T Sheets but are an expanded version of them. The electronic systems can provide a report that diagnoses patients based on their symptoms recorded by the nurse or physician. It also can act as a medical calculator, determining what medications are needed for a patient, and the dosage intake, based on the patient's age, weight and other information. It also includes blood test data, patient's past visits, previous medical records, order test, results, even waiting room times.

Today, the majority of its revenue comes from the electronic systems.

The systems that Gandy and Langdon have provided have reduced the stress of health care workers and saved lives, Sanyal said.

"There are about 120 million emergency care visits in the country, and about 40 million flow through our systems," Sanyal said. "Essentially we have touched the lives of 40

million patients every year. If you want to impact the lives of 40 million patients, this is the way to do it. Everyone wants to change health care, but we believe that only people a part of the health care system can do that. That's what we think is our biggest contribution to health care."

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GREATEST CHALLENGE



"We have two challenges," said CEO Sunny Sanyal. "One, is to convert. We still have a large

base that's on paper-based systems. Getting the market to convert from paper to electronic is one of our biggest opportunities and biggest challenges. The second challenge is to continue to make the right investments that take us into other areas that will drive higher growth."

CHANGING HEALTH CARE

NAME: T-System

BUSINESS: Health care

HEADQUARTERS: 4020 McEwen Drive, Dallas

OWNERSHIP: Private

TOP EXECUTIVES: Dr. Robert Langdon, Dr.

Woodrow Gandy and Sunny Sanyal

EMPLOYEES: 215 based in Dallas

ANNUAL REVENUE: N/A

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