



CASE STUDY - ESSENTIA HEALTH



OHM SOFTWARE TRAINING DRAMATICALLY IMPROVES STAFF EFFICIENCY AND USER SATISFACTION WHILE SUPPORTING A HEALTH SYSTEM'S LONG-RANGE WORKFORCE PROTECTION GOALS



Essentia Health

On the shores of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minn. and surrounding communities, Essentia Health-East Region operates St. Mary's Medical Center, six critical access hospitals, and 24 affiliated primary care and multi-specialty facilities. The regional health system has approximately 7,300 employees.

THE CHALLENGE

Richard Fisher, manager of workers' compensation, employee health and loss prevention, and his colleagues must satisfy a host of workplace health and safety requirements. Internal human resource policies, Joint Commission standards, Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) regulations, and federal mandates such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act are all on the radar.

In addition, the employee health team is responsible for ensuring compliance with a Minnesota law requiring every licensed healthcare facility, including satellite clinics, to implement a safe patient handling program.

While low-back strain and other injuries often occur when caregivers

"OHM gives us a distinct advantage by selling prevention, which is my goal in life, and it has simplified our lives."

Richard Fisher,
Manager, Essentia Health

lift and transfer patients, other risks also demand the attention of employee health staff. Slips, trips and falls, needlestick and sharps injuries, assaults by combative patients and visitors, and potential exposure to contagious diseases, infections and toxic medications are part of daily life.

Meanwhile, the department's primary objectives – injury/illness prevention and management – have been encumbered for years by a paper-based recordkeeping system.

"It's not just the challenge of documentation and complying with standards and regulations," Fisher said. "That's the easy part compared to trying to change the culture and get healthcare professionals to have more concern for their own personal well-being."

THE SOLUTION

Essentia-St. Mary's installed UL's Workplace Health and Safety Occupational Health Manager (OHM) software in 2000, originally as

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an internal mainframe application and later transitioning to an online hosted solution.

OHM is a helpful tool because it automates data collection, statistical analysis and reporting. At Essentia, the employee health department also depends on OHM to support its transition from paper to electronic records – a major undertaking.

When Fisher joined the team in 2011, he quickly realized staff could further streamline operations and better align its prevention and management objectives if they received refresher training on the software.

He invited an OHM specialist from UL Workplace Health and Safety to spend two days on site to provide intensive training. Preparation for the site visit included joint development of an action plan designed to address staff questions and Essentia's specific needs.

"It was a wonderful experience," Fisher said. "Everyone loved the approach and the trainer's attentiveness. It could not have gone better."

RESULTS

Using OHM to produce performance dashboards for senior executives, he is able to tie injury-related cost data he obtains from Essentia's third party administrator (TPA) with medical and indemnity costs by injury type, frequency and job category. Rather than wait for an annual report from the TPA, the monthly reports he generates help expedite root-cause analysis and preventive measures.

"For instance, now I can go to the chief nursing officer of the region and say, 'Here are how many lost time and restricted time days we have had and here is the monthly cost.' That really gets her attention.," Fisher said.

Prior to refresher training, he estimates staff used about 60 percent of OHM's capacity in the modules with which they were familiar and vastly underutilized the remainder. With training, all of the users report they feel much more comfortable with and knowledgeable about the entire system. *"With annual refresher training, I believe we would nearly maximize the capabilities of each module,"* he said.

With respect to the return on investment in refresher training, Fisher estimates it has more than paid for itself in terms of performance improvement. Staff members have noted dramatic decreases in manual tasks, sub-directory searches and page reformatting and

corresponding increases in efficiency and user satisfaction.

"UL Workplace Health and Safety has the understanding of all that the software can do, and our partnership with them has tremendous value," he said. *"You can always update the software. But when you do, you need to update the people, too."*

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