



Hospital Supply Distributor Increases Throughput by 500%

Features and Benefits

Reduced Overall Operating Expenses

Increased System Throughput By 500%

Combined Inventory to Increase Buying Power

Expanded Distribution To Two Hospitals, A Health Care Facility, An Extended Care Facility, 11 Local Clinics, 6 Blood Service Centers And 77 Hospital Nursing Stations!

Industry Group: Order Fulfillment Solutions (OFS)



Pressure to reduce health care costs is an ever-present reality. A health center in Vancouver teamed up with a general hospital in Richmond to consolidate their separate medical supply warehouses. Consolidating inventory, the health care facilities have increased their bulk buying power and reduced overall storage space and manpower.

Using paper pick lists and shelving in a 12,000 square foot warehouse in Vancouver could not provide the throughput the health care facilities required. Turning to automation, 70% of the SKUs including bandages, needles, gauze, laboratory devices, catheters, masks and respiratory devices are now distributed from a system of four horizontal carousels, two Pick Light Towers and workstation put lights all driven by a custom software package.

Throughput Required

The carousel system throughput improved by as much as 500%. "While our manual pick rate, was only 35 or 40 lines an hour, the pick rate from the carousel system is 150 to 200 lines an hour," emphasized Melinda Mui, Director of Logistics Operations. "The increased efficiency allowed us to free up some of our resources and serve the other health facilities."

No Waiting to Pick

Only a single picker operates the workstation at the

end of the four-carousel cluster. Picking is rapid because supplies are brought to the picker, rather than the picker walking to the supplies. The software-driven carousels stay several picks ahead of the operator, automatically turning via the shortest path to pre-position and present the correct carriers for picking. The picker never needs to wait for a carrier. Pick-to-light technology directs the worker to the specific shelf on the exact carrier to pick from and indicates the quantity to assure maximum accuracy.

Up to 10 orders are simultaneously batch-picked and placed in totes at the workstation. Put-lights direct the operator to place the correct quantity of supplies into each tote. When an order is complete, it is consolidated with the bulk items and transported to a marshaling area for delivery to the health care facility.

Expanded Distribution

Not only does the warehouse distribute to the Vancouver health center and the Richmond hospital as originally planned, but due to their success they have been able to expand their distribution services to another hospital, an extended care facility, 11 local clinics, 6 blood service centers and 77 hospital nursing stations!

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