El Centro Regional Medical Center

Reduces Food Costs 15% and
Personalizes Patient Meal Ordering

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Challenge:

Transitioning to room service resulted in high call volumes for ECRMC's call center. The hospital needed an additional method of meal ordering to offer patients. "We were looking for a different method to add for patients to place their menu selections," Walters stated. "We weren't looking to replace the call center, but we were looking to unload some of that volume from them."

Solution:

ECRMC turned to CBORD's latest innovation, the CBORD Patient app, as an alternate method for patients to place meal orders that would help reduce the number of calls coming in to the call center.

Result:

The CBORD Patient app, only in operation for a matter of months, is already proving to boost the patient and family experience. "The app is helping reduce the call volume, and the patients using it have given positive feedback. They like the independence of using the customized menus in the app to order," Walters commented.

El Centro Regional Medical Center (ECRMC) is an acute-care hospital located in Southern California near the Mexican border. The 161-bed hospital maintains a commitment to patient safety and a focus on providing an outstanding patient and family experience. In fact, ECRMC won the Healthgrades 2018 Patient Safety Excellence Award, a distinction that places the hospital among the top 10% of all short-term acute care hospitals.

As part of its commitment to improving the patient experience, ECRMC took a hospital-wide approach, looking beyond its medical functions to identify additional areas that impact safety and satisfaction. Food services and patient nutrition emerged as important areas of focus.

The hospital decided to bring food service operations in-house, moving away from contracted food service management, with the goal of improving the overall dining experience at ECRMC.

At that point, the foodservice function at ECRMC was operating manually. "We were printing tri-fold menus from Microsoft Word, circling with golf pencils, and affixing patient IDs using mailing labels. We were

also maintaining a handwritten patient card system," said Marc Walters, food service director at ECRMC.

Walters knew it was important to implement a system that would enable his department to operate more efficiently and support the hospital's commitment to improving the patient and family experience.

ECRMC turned to CBORD for a proven technology solution designed for the unique needs of healthcare food service. The hospital implemented CBORD's full suite of seamlessly integrated solutions to manage the entire operation—from back-of-house food production and patient nutrition services with on-demand room service to employee cashless accounts and point-of-sale.

"CBORD's solutions help overall, in multiple ways," Walters noted. "We are able to audit, analyze, and improve our operation—from production to menu selection, tray delivery and pickup monitoring, and nutrient analysis. All were manual audits, or not audited, prior to CBORD. We have complete front-of-house to back-of-house integration of POS, dietary, and production for the first time."

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Changes Bring Success and Challenges

As Walters was moving his food service operation away from a contracted management company to a self-operating model, he was also bringing patient nutrition services in-house and switching from a traditional tray line to hotel-style room service.

The change to room service has proven to be a hit with patients. They appreciate being able to choose what and when they eat. "Patients receiving house trays went from 60% to less than 5% almost overnight after room service was implemented," Walters commented. "When 95% of patients are selecting their meals, it leads to improved satisfaction and reduced food waste. Enabling patients to select their meals means we aren't sending house trays with items they don't want."

Patients were given the flexibility of ordering by phone or face-to-face with a staff member at their bedside. "With the overwhelming response from patients, we experienced some difficulties with the call center," Walters said. "We had two phone lines and a heavy call volume. Patients were complaining about being put on hold and calls going unanswered or to voicemail."

ECRMC needed an additional method of meal ordering to offer patients. "We were looking for a different method to add for patients to place their menu selections," Walters stated. "We weren't looking to replace the call center, but we were looking to unload some of that volume from them."

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> **--Marc Walters**

Solution: CBORD Innovation

Walters soon discovered that CBORD's latest innovation, the CBORD Patient app, was exactly what he needed: an alternate method for patients to place meal orders that would help reduce the number of calls coming in to the call center.

The CBORD Patient app securely connects a patient's own mobile device—or a hospital-provided device—to CBORD food and nutrition systems for diet order safety and compliance.

Patients can use the mobile app to self-order from personalized menus for current and future meal periods. Menus in the app also include personalized nutrition goals, as well as multiple language options, helping hospitals provide a better patient experience that improves engagement and satisfaction.

"We are pleased to provide omni-channel meal ordering options to appeal to more patients," noted Walters. "Patients and their families don't have to wait on hold, wait for a call back, or wait for bedside ordering. They can use the app to place orders any time, day or night."
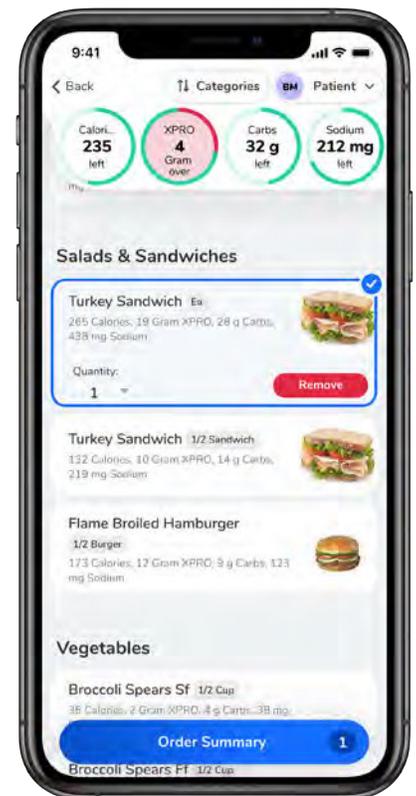
CBORD Patient app displays personalized menus.

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Results

CBORD's solutions overall are contributing to operational improvements and helping ECRMC achieve the original objectives of reducing food costs and waste, ensuring compliance with diet orders, and improving patient satisfaction.

Room Service Choice and the CBORD Patient app together have positively impacted all three objective areas. "With room service in place, food cost per patient day decreased 15% from the previous year," commented Walters. "During that time, our volumes increased 9% and productive labor hours per meal served increased only 3%."

ECRMC has been able to improve compliance with diet orders by carefully setting up their data in the CBORD system to ensure orders adhere to limits and restrictions. "CBORD as a whole is helping our staff maintain compliance with their diet orders. They're able to follow the compliance that's built into the system," Walters said.

The CBORD Patient app, only in operation for a matter of months, is already making a positive difference. "The app is helping reduce the call volume, and the patients using it have given positive feedback. They like the independence of using the customized menus in the app to order," Walters commented. "And, family members appreciate being able to place orders at any time for

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a loved one who may not be able to order for themselves."

It takes a considerable amount of planning and preparation to implement a solution of this scope, particularly with the CBORD Patient app. "With the app, you are reaching a different audience," Walters noted. "Instead of skilled staff who can adjust patient orders on-the-fly to ensure compliance, you now have to make sure the software is set up properly to enforce the diet orders and restrictions. It's also important to name your food items in regular language and include photos of your food items in the app."

Walters also discussed the importance of continuously marketing the app to keep staff

engaged and to encourage patients to use it. "CBORD provided some helpful marketing templates that we've customized," Walters stated. "We've created how-to guides, and we're placing posters in patient rooms, putting information in patient admission packets, and more."

By giving patients and their families the power to choose their meals and delivery times—and letting them use a convenient, always available mobile app that displays a personalized, compliant menu—Walters is helping establish ECRMC as a leader in providing an outstanding experience for patients and their families.

ECRMC markets the app throughout the hospital.

Who is CBORD?

For more than three decades, CBORD has delivered smarter food and nutrition software that elevates patient satisfaction and improves efficiencies. Connecting hospitals to their patients, employees, and guests, our technology provides tools that help hospital systems, senior living communities, and multi-site healthcare campuses meet rising resident and patient expectations.

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