St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital Improves Workforce Management with Kronos for Healthcare

Located in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) is a 166-bed facility that delivers high-quality care to residents of the county of Elgin. The fully accredited community hospital provides comprehensive 24-hour coverage and employs 850 professionals, including 200 credentialed professional staff members who provide in-hospital care. The hospital’s services include emergency medicine, surgical programs, cardiorespiratory services, sleep studies, palliative care, chemotherapy, diagnostic imaging, pediatrics, obstetrics, and inpatient mental health services.

CHALLENGES

- Each unit manually scheduled staff on spreadsheets, creating opportunities for scheduling favoritism and collective agreement violations
- Timecards were manually reviewed at multiple levels before data was input into the payroll system, a time-consuming process that created payroll errors and rework
- Getting a handle on absenteeism — and its costs — was difficult without access to auditable, accurate, and real-time data

SOLUTION

- The automated Kronos for Healthcare workforce management suite provides centralized timekeeping, scheduling, and absence management to increase productivity, better control labour costs, and reduce compliance concerns

BENEFITS

- Centralized scheduling helps ensure staff schedules are fair and equitable — and in compliance with all collective agreements — with a focus on delivering quality patient care
- Automated timekeeping has reduced payroll preparation from two days to a few hours and virtually eliminated payroll errors
- Self-service tools provide employee data transparency that enhances staff satisfaction
- Real-time attendance data and reporting has enabled a stronger attendance management program
- A reduction in average days absent has produced savings of more than $250,000 over two years, while overtime costs decreased $400,000 in the first year

“Running an attendance management program on a labour-intensive and shaky foundation was next to impossible. Much of our success in managing attendance has been possible because of the Kronos system.”

Malcolm Hopkins,
VP and CFO,
St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital
THE STORY — ST. THOMAS ELGIN GENERAL HOSPITAL

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) was drowning in paper — schedules, schedule-swap requests, time-off requests, and timecards. Each unit created a schedule spreadsheet, which didn’t ensure equitable assignments or adherence to collective bargaining agreements. Time off was recorded on timecards with color-coded boxes: blue for sick and green for vacation. Multiple layers of staff reviewed timecards before they reached payroll for tedious data entry. This scheduling and timekeeping process was onerous and open to error.

To overcome these issues — as well as ensure quality patient care — STEGH added the Kronos® for Healthcare workforce management suite. Now, using the centralized scheduling solution Workforce ESP, the organization is scheduling staff fairly and equitably while matching patient census and acuity. Compliance is also less of an issue with the solution designed to automatically follow all collective agreement rules. Automated timekeeping has improved accuracy and productivity, cutting payroll processing time to just a few hours. And, the hospital has better control of labor costs with real-time visibility into employee time and attendance.

Centralized scheduling improves compliance
Prior to adding Workforce ESP, STEGH units did their own scheduling, creating the potential for favoritism, grievances, and unnecessary overtime. “By bringing scheduling into a centralized scheduling office with a select group of schedulers that work with Workforce ESP, we have data integrity and increased quality of information,” says Nancy Ferguson, scheduling and payroll team leader.

Collective agreement rules for each of the hospital’s three unions are built into the scheduling system, making scheduling favoritism no longer an issue. With all information documented in Workforce ESP, union grievances have decreased, and if there is a grievance, this information substantiates fact finding, notes Ferguson.

At a glance, schedulers can see each unit’s patient census and which units can send staff to another unit to meet census needs. This has helped sustain quality patient care while curbing overtime.

Automated timekeeping speeds payroll process
To further reduce paper use and improve productivity, STEGH added Workforce Timekeeper. Previously, after timecards made their way through multiple review levels, one payroll employee spent a day and a half each week inputting employee time data. Now, one person spends just a few hours reviewing exceptions prior to payroll processing. Corrections are minimal and manual cheques are rare.

Self-service tools boost transparency and satisfaction
The hospital decided to expand productivity further with Kronos for Healthcare. The solution provides greater transparency to managers and employees through self-service features. Before, employees used paper for shift-swap and time-off requests, non-availability notification, and overtime. Using self-service tools, staff can now view unit schedules online, see who is available for a shift swap, electronically make a shift swap or vacation request, view the status of requests, and ensure timecard accuracy before payroll processing. This transparency has decreased employee calls to the scheduling and payroll offices.

These self-service tools have helped make the hospital an employer of choice, particularly with recent nursing graduates who may be part-time employees at a few area hospitals. “They love being able to log in from home to see their schedule and make swaps so they can juggle their work schedules,” Ferguson explains.

Attendance management helps deliver labor cost savings
Gaining a clearer picture of attendance — and having reporting readily available to identify trends and ensure attendance policies are being followed — has been another big benefit, notes Ferguson. Senior management can see if managers have documented conversations with employees with attendance issues.

Over the first two years, STEGH realized more than $250,000 in direct savings through a reduction in days absent per employee. In addition, the average paid sick days per employee have been steadily decreasing. Better visibility into employee time, including those approaching overtime, has helped the hospital see an additional $400,000 in overtime savings by not assigning employees with overtime to cover sick calls.

Valuable Kronos implementation and support services
During and after the implementation of STEGH’s Kronos for Healthcare solution, Ferguson says Kronos staff have been very supportive. If she or other staff have questions, they use the customer portal for answers or contact Kronos Global Support. “The turnaround time is great,” she says. “The Global Support team is very knowledgeable and available when we need them.”

The hospital looks forward to further mining the value of its Kronos for Healthcare solution, she adds, to optimize staffing in the most cost-effective way possible while providing quality patient care.