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## iMAR from ExactMed Solutions • By Darryl Thomas

Opened in 2005, the Maples at Har-Ber Meadows in Springdale, Arkansas, is a 140-bed skilled-nursing facility, accepting Medicare, Medicaid, and private payment and providing long-term care, as well as physical, speech, and occupational therapy, for 128 residents. Our facility also provides a good deal of short-term rehab, serving about 500 residents over the past year and a half – 300 of whom have gone home after receiving care.

From day one, our facility has used iMAR from ExactMed Solutions to facilitate medication management across the care spectrum. The bar code-based system helps our nurses ensure the “five rights” of medication administration – right resident, right medication, right dose, right route, and right time – throughout each med pass. If a nurse attempts to administer the wrong medication, the system alerts him or her to the error.

In this way, iMAR has allowed our facility to decrease medication errors and improve resident safety.

### System Selection

Reliance Health Care, our parent company, made a corporate decision to provide medication management software to its facilities. With our chief operating officer, I visited AllCare Pharmacy in Arkadelphia to evaluate the systems available to us. As an administrator, I valued iMAR’s ability to let me view, from any computer, the list of medications pending for my residents, as well as those medications that are either late or about to be late. By offering a computerized medication administration record, iMAR ensures the accuracy of nursing documentation.

The iMAR system also interfaces with our pharmacy directly, allowing us to order medications electronically. Once we input an order, we typically receive the medication in our next delivery from the pharmacy. The system is also user-friendly for nurses, utilizing easy-to-read and -navigate interfaces and resident photos to ensure medication administration accuracy. Furthermore, ExactMed representatives complete the system set up themselves, making the implementation easier for our staff members.

### How It Works

The iMAR system operates using a computer monitor, CPU, and bar code scanner mounted to a typical medication cart. As medications are administered by our nurses, iMAR communicates that information over a wireless network to receivers located at our two nursing stations. The information is then interfaced with our medical records system, completing the documentation of medication administration events.

To administer a medication, a nurse selects the resident’s name, with

a photo for verification, from the menu on the cart’s computer screen. Using the list of medications in the patient’s profile, the nurse selects the appropriate medication cards from the cart, scans the medication’s bar code, and if the right medication has been selected for that patient, the system prompts the nurse to administer it. The system alerts the nurse if the wrong medication has been selected, or if the nurse is attempting to give a medication at the wrong time, i.e. an afternoon dose during a morning med pass. iMAR also creates an electronic medication administration record (MAR), which enables us to more easily run drug utilization reports to maintain proper inventory levels, streamline pharmacy orders, and a any particular nurse’s medication administration activities. In the event of system downtime, we have a plan to use a back-up paper MAR, but we have not yet had the need to do so.



### Results and Benefits

Since our opening in 2005, the Maples at Har-Ber Meadows has been through three state surveys, and those surveys have yet to reveal a medication error – an achievement I credit iMAR with. Furthermore, I believe our use of the system has had a positive impact on staff morale. Of course, it takes new nurses a couple of weeks to acclimate to the software, but after about a month of using iMAR, 100% of our nurses have said they prefer the electronic MAR to using paper-based MARs. It has had little impact on the amount of time they spend performing med passes, and they are able to do their jobs with confidence, knowing their residents are receiving the correct medications.

To achieve the same levels of success with iMAR at your facility, ensure that your nurses receive proper training from day one. Our nurses receive a lot of hands-on training, and once they learn the system, they prefer it to working with a manual, paper-based documentation system. I liken it to learning to drive a car; it takes some time, but once you learn, you love it. ■

*Since 2005, Darryl Thomas has served as the administrator of the Maples at Har-Ber Meadows. With a business administration and management degree from Sam Houston State University Huntsville in Texas, he previously served as the director of operations for Beverly Health Care of Arkansas.*



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