

Doctors update their schedules remotely using GPRS via Ironbark C# Healthcare

27th January, 2005, Brisbane: Family Care Medical Services (FCMS) have gone live with the Ironbark Healthcare system, developed specifically for medical deputising service providers.

As Australia's largest provider of after hours primary medical care services, FCMS runs the after hours primary medical care home visiting service in South East Queensland and clinics co-located with public hospitals.

General Practitioners subscribe to Family Care Medical Services so that their patients are provided with primary care during the after hours period either by a doctor in their own home or at an after hours surgery.

Following a period of growth both in terms of services and geography, it was becoming obvious to Family Care that their existing systems were struggling to keep up with the success of the company.

They recognised a need to implement a business management system which would make it easier for them to comply with ever changing and increasing service delivery standards set by the Government as well as to take advantage of the benefits available to them by integrating new remote connectivity and data transmittal technologies into their systems.

Family Care were running an outmoded Unix system into which there had been limited investment over the previous twenty years. This was causing the company several headaches, not least being old and slow computer hardware and inflexible data transfer methods. Data entry was carried out via a user unfriendly DOS interface incurring significant costs in staff training as well as data entry itself being extremely time consuming.

As a company operating in a niche industry with complex and challenging requirements, it was crucial that Family Care identified a supplier not only capable of understanding their requirements but one with the experience required to develop a dependable, yet innovative solution.

With these issues in mind, Family Care and Ironbark, in a joint venture, created Ironbark Healthcare specifically for Medical Deputising Services. The system has been developed in Microsoft C#, part of the .NET environment and the most future proof development language available today.

To ensure a seamless and disruption free switch to the new management system, the C# solution was developed by Ironbark as a rollover system incorporating Family Care's existing systems and processes. In addition, the old and new systems were run in tandem for a month at the beginning of the Go Live process. This meant that Family Care could continue working with their existing processes and be sure that all of their staff were fully trained and happy to use the new system before switching over permanently.

Ironbark Healthcare allows for fast and accurate appointment scheduling both for home visits and surgery. As patient calls are received by the Family Care control centre they are assigned to the most appropriate doctor, according to variables such as where they live and whether they have been seen by a particular doctor previously. Priority patients are graphically flagged to control centre staff according to relative urgency of complaint, waiting times and so on.

Doctors are able to access these schedules remotely using PDA's equipped with GPRS connectivity. They can check their schedules 'on the road' to ensure any last minute changes such as urgent or cancelled appointments can be incorporated into their schedules immediately and can also send any necessary information back to the control centre.

In a company like Family Care where accuracy is essential it is fundamental that their management systems are stable, robust and dependable. Ironbark has not only provided them with this but with a scalable, future proof solution capable of growing with the business.

Since implementation, Ironbark Helathcare has become a key part of the Family Care's business operation. Family Care have a modern system which is quick and cost effective to update as well as being adaptable to the future addition and integration of new technologies.

The innovative use of one such technology - GPRS has streamlined the company's scheduling processes, allowing them and their patients to benefit from huge improvements in efficiency and time saving.

"This was a challenging and complex project and it is testimony to the wonderful teamwork that developed between Ironbark and Family Care Medical Services that everything went so well. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the exceptionally competent way in which the Ironbark team successfully upgraded and implemented the software"

Jean Nixon, Director Special Projects, Family Care Medical Services

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About Ironbark Software:

Ironbark Software develops and supports customized business management software for high growth companies. We specialize in a number of different industries, including fresh produce (from growers, to pack houses), seafood, fuel distribution, manufacturing, timber, building and construction and healthcare. Our specialist knowledge in our industries, combined with our commitment to R & D has led Ironbark Software to be the number one choice in business management systems for over 29 years.

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