

## SUCCESS STORY

# Cherry County Hospital Meets Meaningful Use Challenges with Dedicated Expert Resources from Iatric Systems Professional Services



**OBJECTIVE:** Like other hospitals, Cherry County Hospital had to comply with the various requirements of Meaningful Use Stage 1 and Stage 2. Naturally they wanted to do it efficiently and cost-effectively but as an isolated rural hospital with limited staff, they weren't sure it was even possible.

**SITUATION:** Cherry County Hospital is a small critical-access hospital in a very remote part of Nebraska. (Cherry County is larger than Connecticut but has a population of less than 6000.) The hospital's IT team already had many other projects and responsibilities, and hospital management recognized that trying to keep up with the added workload, time pressure, and specialized knowledge required for Meaningful Use had become unmanageable.

**SOLUTION:** The hospital engaged Iatric Systems Professional Services to provide a number of specialized services to meet its Meaningful Use requirements, drawing upon experience gained from helping hundreds of other hospitals. Early in the engagement, Iatric Systems also solved some urgent problems on short notice. Urgent problems included building interfaces, designing Clinical Quality Measures (CQM) reports, and performing other tasks required for Stage 1 that had not been completed. As Stage 1 drew to a close, Iatric Systems provided a Meaningful Use Gap Analysis and Project Management services to help the hospital make a smooth transition to Stage 2.

**RESULTS:** Cherry County Hospital successfully attested for Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2) and collected the incentive dollars that they earned. The hospital has started its Stage 2 reporting and engaged Iatric Systems to provide Continuous Monitoring services until 2017 to ensure they stay on track with Meaningful Use compliance. For an extra level of assurance, Iatric Systems will also conduct a Mock Audit to make sure the hospital is fully prepared in the event of a real CMS audit. Despite their small size, Cherry County now has access to expert Meaningful Use resources rarely available even in much larger hospitals.

*"We knew we had to get it done, and we had to do it efficiently. That's what Iatric Systems brings to the table."*

*– Brent Peterson  
CEO, Cherry County Hospital*

Few hospital IT departments have the expertise or available staff to handle the complexities of Meaningful Use on their own. For a rural hospital like Cherry County Hospital in Valentine, Nebraska, it's even more challenging. "We are a small critical-access hospital in a very isolated area. I don't think you can adequately express the time demands that a standard like Meaningful Use puts on our staff," says Brent Peterson, CEO at Cherry County Hospital. Rather than try to handle it all internally, Cherry County Hospital relies on the expertise of Iatric Systems Professional Services.

## The Engagement Begins

When Cherry County started their Meaningful Use reporting in 2013, they purchased Iatric Systems Meaningful Use Manager™ to track their progress. (The web-based dashboard was highly recommended by another hospital vendor.) While the dashboard allowed them to see their progress at a glance, that progress had stalled because hospital staff had many other priorities. A different strategy was needed, and in April 2014, Cherry County engaged Iatric Systems to provide expert services to meet its Meaningful Use requirements. "Meaningful Use is very complex, and you need dedicated people working on it," Brent adds. "We have very dedicated employees, but this is not their area of expertise, and we were facing significant time limitations."

Stage 1 services included IMO (Intelligent Medical Objects) Installation and Mapping. This consolidated medical coding to a single IMO code for reporting, Value Set Mapping for CQMs, and Value Set Mapping for Public Health Interfaces. "When we were ready to exchange information, I contacted several major hospitals that we do data transfers with and they were not as far along as we were. That made me feel very good about our progress," says Peggy Snell, Cherry County Hospital CFO.

Iatric Systems helped guide Cherry County through its successful attestations for Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2). "Iatric Systems was with us for both attestations and was very proactive to make sure nothing was overlooked," Peggy adds. "We looked at the numbers and said 'Wow!'. We absolutely could not have done it without the help from Iatric Systems."

## The Engagement Continues

As Stage 1 drew to a close, Iatric Systems conducted a Stage 2 Gap Analysis to determine Cherry County's Stage 2 readiness and identify gaps for remediation. The next engagement was Stage 2 Project Management, which included helping implement clinician workflow improvements and other changes in order to start Stage 2 reporting in October 2014.

In January 2015, Cherry County hired Iatric Systems for two additional professional services engagements to lead them through Stage 2 attestation. The first, which extends until 2017, is continuous monitoring of Meaningful Use Manager and CQM data to ensure the hospital stays on track to meet Stage 2 thresholds. ("They're making sure we stay motivated, stay on schedule, and stay on course," Peggy adds.) Iatric Systems will also conduct a Meaningful Use Mock Audit, which will be performed in the exact same way as a CMS audit to ensure that Cherry County has all required documentation to support data submitted for attestation.

## Leveling the Playing Field

With the help of Iatric Systems Professional Services, a small rural hospital like Cherry County has been able to meet its Meaningful Use requirements cost-effectively, on schedule, and with minimal stress. "We knew we had to get it done, and we had to do it efficiently. That's what Iatric Systems brings to the table," Brent adds. "The dedication of their consultants is amazing, and they really know what they're doing."

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