

## Case Study: LIS

### Support, Flexibility Ease LIS Upgrades

By Annette Iacono

As vice president of Operations for Brookside (PA) Clinical Laboratory Inc. (BCL), I am responsible for the LIS, billing, accounts receivable and outreach systems needs for the laboratory. It had been approximately five years since we made any major upgrades to our current LIS and billing system, but after 2.5 million test procedures in 2005 and rapid growth expected for 2006 and 2007, it was time to think about an upgrade.

Computer Service & Support Inc. (CSS), Linwood, NJ, had provided our LIS since 1980 and sent a proposal to upgrade the system. Prior to agreeing to upgrade with CSS, we decided to examine the options of vendors that specialize in outreach laboratories.

### Searching for a Match

Our facility has specific requirements for any LIS system we implement. We serve the laboratory needs of physical rehabilitation centers, industries, colleges, community organizations, physicians, continuing care retirement communities, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers and outpatients, so phlebotomy pre-scheduling and part A billing were necessary components we looked for during system selection. BCL also offers direct remote printing, auto-faxing and secured Web access to its clients and has a large investment in outreach equipment.

I reviewed a number of LIS vendors' Web sites, visited booths at trade shows and decided to request demos and quotes from three vendors that met our selection criteria. Many of the companies that we initially contacted could not offer integrated LIS and billing. One of the important decision criteria was selecting a vendor that could provide a single point of support for our entire laboratory's IT needs. Most of the LIS vendors that provided us with demonstrations would meet our needs with minimum customization.

### Full Functionality

After examining vendors' functionality features, initial licensing fees, installation, training and ongoing support fees, BCL decided to upgrade with our current vendor, CSS. Their latest version, CLS-2000 8.0, offered the same primary functionality as the LIS vendors who made presentations to our lab. Many vendors did not offer site licenses for the LIS and billing software modules. Also, CSS does not charge for adding workstations, which is important to us because of our growth rate.

Over the past 25 years, BCL has invested in custom applications and a number of interfaces. CSS was very cooperative in migrating our custom software and interfaces to its latest LIS and billing system. We chose to install the IBM RS/6000 P-series server with 300 Gigabytes of RIAD-5 redundant storage and a four-way RISC processor, and all of our current peripherals were able to be integrated.

We keep five years of online active results and billing demographic data on the system, and as part of our upgrade requirements all of our data would need to be accessed while the upgrade installation was performed. CSS was able to meet this need, and after the new system hardware and application software were delivered, they provided on-site training on the software and installed their new Medicare part A module.

### Smooth Sailing

The system upgrade and data migration were performed on a Sunday evening after our last shift. The CSS installation and training staff migrated all of our data from our existing server to the IBM P-Series server. Nine instrumentation interfaces and outreach modules were completely operational for the first shift on Monday. All of the new application software and customized software provide enhanced capabilities to all departments at the laboratory, and CSS had staff members available for all shifts to provide any additional training or support that was required.

The system greatly enhanced all laboratory departments, client services and billing. BCL reports an average of 3,500 procedures per day. The new part A module enabled us to utilize our seven full-time employees in billing to become more efficient and properly bill the acute-care facilities. Further, we are now able to offer our clients both a weekly invoice and a monthly recap.

The NHS-3500 nursing home module allows us to process an average of 300 patient draws automatically with two full-time employees to manage all patient and phlebotomy scheduling and facility part A census information. Other laboratories similar in size to BCL have tripled the number of employees to manage their long-term and acute-care facilities. The system allows us to produce monthly, weekly and daily draw reports sorted by phlebotomist and facility. Many manhours of travel and mileage calculation have been eliminated with the automatic calculation and pricing feature installed by CSS.

CSS provides direct support and help desk services for all of its software products. In addition, as an IBM business partner, there are no conflicts between our software and hardware vendors. All support calls, including hardware related issues, are made to CSS. CSS provides a single support solution for our LIS needs.

It is important for me to work with a vendor who has the same objectives that Brookside has when providing service: quality, integrity and the ability to meet the individual needs of our clients. Most importantly, the vendor must have the resources and expertise to make certain each patient is receiving the best possible care. A vendor like CSS can be instrumental for a laboratory to maintain and sustain its objectives and navigate through the healthcare industry.

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