

# CENTRE HOSPITALIER UNIVERSITAIRE SAINT-PIERRE



**“THE COGNOS SOLUTION ALLOWS US TO ANALYZE FINANCIAL DATA EFFECTIVELY IN ORDER TO CREATE GREATER AWARENESS AND THEN ACT ACCORDINGLY TO IMPROVE OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION.”**

— F. CAMMAERTS, IT MANAGER, CHU SAINT-PIERRE

## **A FULL-FLEDGED SOCIAL HEALTH COMPANY**

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Saint-Pierre is a public access teaching hospital in the heart of Brussels. The hospital offers general and specialist medical services in around twenty disciplines (including serious surgical operations, heart surgery, and so on). It houses a polyclinic and Belgium’s largest Accident and Emergency department. CHU Saint-Pierre is linked with two major universities in Brussels, ULB, and VUB, and works closely with eight other hospitals in the Brussels region within the IRIS organization.

For various reasons, including its location, this “social health company”, with its 1,700 employees, fills a vital social role: it is accessible to everyone, irrespective of social class, nationality, or religion. CHU Saint-Pierre is often the front line for problem groups such as the homeless, drug addicts, and social assistance cases.

## **CHU SAINT-PIERRE AT A GLANCE (2000)**

- Number of beds: 434
- Polyclinic consultations 211,692
- Emergency admissions: 70,033
- Normal hospital admissions: 16,499

## **SECURING THE HOSPITAL’S FUTURE**

In 1997, a crucial year of transition for CHU Saint-Pierre, the health authorities had decided to split off the hospital, together with eight other Brussels public

access hospitals, from the public social welfare centers (OCMWs), and to write off their accumulated debts. But in the future, CHU Saint-Pierre would have to operate autonomously and take over the responsibility for its own financial equilibrium.

“This greater financial responsibility represented a great challenge for us,” said Mr. F. Cammaerts, IT Manager. “CHU Saint-Pierre’s situation as a public hospital in the heart of Brussels is highly specific. Given this, we have to follow extremely strict rules imposed upon us by the social security authorities, health insurance mutual societies, government departments, and so on.” The management was aware that significant investments were needed to secure the hospital’s future. One of the first investments to be approved was for a radical overhaul and modernization of the hospital’s IT systems. This included a measurement and analysis instrument, to give an accurate insight into the financial situation as a basis for making the right decisions for the future.

“Bringing about a total change in the previous mentality of both patients and staff was one of the most challenging tasks,” added Mr. Cammaerts. CHU Saint-Pierre had the reputation of being a ‘free’ hospital. Patients with payment problems rarely reacted to payment reminders. This had to change to enable the hospital to continue fulfilling its social role. “We needed to analyze data effectively in order to create greater awareness and then act accordingly to improve our financial situation.”



THE NEXT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE™

## **CHALLENGES FACED**

- Assume greater financial responsibility as a public, social hospital
- Get a clear view of operations and financial streams
- Empower all personnel with information flow and bring about a change in mentality
- Secure the hospital's future and enable future investments

## **MASTERING ENORMOUS AMOUNTS OF DATA**

André Decoene is the external consultant from Actual Case Solution who led the project to develop the IT financial system and the general data warehouse after 1997. He confirmed that it was no simple matter to choose a new analysis and decision support system: "We were looking for a system that would deliver fast results in a large number of fields—all of which were equally urgent. Moreover, the system had to be capable of processing enormous volumes of data while being user friendly." After evaluating the various options, CHU Saint-Pierre chose the Cognos business intelligence solution.

The high volume of data is partly due to CHU Saint-Pierre's polyclinic and emergency departments. To put this into perspective, each year the hospital admits some 35,000 different patients and sends out around 400,000 invoices. Each invoice may contain several different medical treatment codes. This rapidly leads to tables containing between 1 and 10 million records. "We had to retain the global overview, while ensuring that we could still drill down through the figures for checking purposes. Cognos cubes enable us to perform this type of fine analysis," said Mr. Decoene.

Cognos business intelligence was implemented in the following fields:

- accounts (collections)
- hospital activities
- physicians' fee accounts
- employee payroll administration
- invoicing follow-up
- logistics management of drug supplies

## **SUCCESS STRATEGY**

- Implement Cognos business intelligence in a high number of fields
- Give personnel maximum information to create awareness
- Use Cognos to make people more responsible for their actions

## **FAST RESULTS IN SEVERAL FIELDS SIMULTANEOUSLY**

CHU Saint-Pierre appreciated the pragmatic approach that Cognos made possible. "We were able to achieve reliable results almost simultaneously in several fields without wasting any time," confirmed Mr. Cammaerts. "With Cognos, we built a solid basis for reporting and analysis in the typical financial-economic environment of a large and highly diversified hospital. We found the Cognos solution to be extremely flexible and adaptable to our specific needs. The unique interface allows us to work with different levels: for clinicians, paramedics, administration, and so on."

Some of the results achieved were quite spectacular, for example in the physicians' fees accounts area. The Cognos solution is used as a real working basis here. Some doctors work on a freelance basis, but all accounts and payments are centralized in the hospital. Payments received are subdivided and the appropriate amounts transferred on to the physicians. This approach gives the hospital all the information it needs to take measures for improving its cash flow, while reducing the administrative paper streams.

Another field in which excellent results have been achieved is in follow-up payments. The legal department has to deal with a large number of files each year. Previously, the OCMWs pursued recoveries. The criteria for payment demands, legal proceedings, and so on were obscure. "Cognos has enabled us to develop a vision in this field, to identify bad debtors through analysis, to set priorities for payment demands and legal proceedings, and so on. The smooth drill-through facilities offered by Cognos for fine analysis are extremely important here too," added Mr. Decoene.

Enormous progress has also been made in logistics management of drug supplies. The dispensary is now able to carry out a comparison between drugs invoiced and drugs distributed to the treatment units. The reasons for any differences observed can be detected. The dispensary also helps to make the treatment units more aware of their consumption by providing detailed information, thus contributing towards the reduction of overconsumption. Analyses have led to a greater standardization of the drugs used, producing cost savings. The Cognos solution also enables the dispensary to follow developments and identify trends, thus allowing it to act in good time.

#### **BENEFITS REALIZED**

- Tangible and durable results achieved almost simultaneously in several fields
- Better grip on the hospital's situation and future
- Better insight into cash-flow situation and overall financial streams
- General change of mentality, greater sense of responsibility

“We could give dozens more examples,” said Mr. Cammaerts. “In our accounts system, we now have a table that allows us to analyze the average repayment period of the mutual insurance companies and thus improve our cash management situation.” But the most important factor Mr. Cammaerts noticed is the general change of mentality discernible in the hospital. People feel less dependent and less frustrated, and have a greater sense of responsibility.

#### **WHY COGNOS?**

Only Cognos delivers a complete range of integrated, scalable software for corporate performance management. Cognos products let organizations drive performance with enterprise planning and budgeting, monitor it with scorecarding, and understand it with business intelligence reporting and analysis. Founded in 1969, Cognos now serves more than 22,000 customers in over 135 countries.



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