



How to Choose the Right Storage System for Your Medical Records

by Alan Scott of Thistle Storage Systems

With an increasing patient list and limited storage space, the challenge of choosing the right storage system for your organisation has never been more important in the health industry.

Alan Scott from Thistle Storage Systems, one of the UK's leading storage solutions providers, has been designing and installing systems in the medical industry for over 10 years and has provided an insight into the expertise and experience that has been called upon by over 100 Health Trusts and medical practices.

Whilst we would all like storage the size of an aircraft hanger, we must work within the confines of the available space and design a solution that maximises the available space.

The fact of the matter is that many organisations have a storage facility that has grown organically and is becoming less and less efficient or have a system which has been designed to simply store as many records as physically possible.

However when organisations are considering implementing a new storage solution many people tend to focus on the space maximisation.

From our extensive experience having installed thousands of solutions in a diverse range of industries, we know that accessibility must be the number one factor if you are to choose the right storage equipment for your organisation.

Accessibility can be determined by a range of factors however the key drivers will be the number of people accessing the files and whether the solutions is for live, secondary or deep archive information.

When it comes to the storage of records there a number of products available however 90% of the solutions tend to be Mobile Shelving Systems, Static Systems or Slide A Sides.

Mobile Shelving Systems continue to be extremely popular in the Health Industry and offer a tremendous benefit of transforming the capacity of a static system by as much as 100%. The main negative against mobile storage system is the accessibility that they offer.

A prime example is a recent project where we were asked to advise on a mobile shelving system which had been installed in a busy filing room where little thought had been given to how many people would be operating in the room.

The system was creating serious issues because records could not be retrieved or filed at the speed required and the solution was therefore hindering the organisation as



opposed to facilitating. After fully examining the pros and cons of all the alternatives, we recommended that the system was modified to provide static shelving.

Of course the static shelving solution has a major impact on the potential capacity, however when there is high usage by numerous personnel at any one time, there is very little substitute.

The capacity of static shelving can be enhanced where you have access to additional height which allows you to create a tiered system that can double or treble your capacity with virtually no additional floor space.

More and more clients are now considering our Slide a Side shelving systems which allow clients to store additional files similar to the mobile shelving solution but which are accessed by sliding the entire shelving unit to the side.

In a recent project, we were presented with a storage area of 12m x 2.4m and to demonstrate the range of the 3 potential solutions to the client, we presented the full capability and performance of each.

The Mobile System provided the maximum capacity with up to 290 linear metres just pipping the Slide a Side which offered an impressive 285 linear metres.

Unsurprisingly the static shelving offered the least at just 158 linear metres, however it was the cheapest of the 3 options and provided permanent access to all the files.

The Slide-A-Side offered access to an impressive 55% of the files at any given time in comparison to just 7% access by the Mobile Shelving system.

So when it comes to selecting your next storage system it is vital that you consider both space maximization and the level of accessibility you require to make your record storage as efficient as it can be.