— CASE STUDY —
(Epic) Beacon of Light Across Choppy Waters

When our community hospital client was faced with an immediate Epic Beacon talent gap, they relied on the RoundTable team to identify a consultant for the job who possessed significant Epic Beacon and inter-related workflow and module experiences, could quickly garner buy-in from complex clinical operations teams, and was capable of success as a "team" of one Beacon Analyst.

Our consultant with these designations, MHS, RHIA, CAHIMS, rose to the challenge, spending a full year engaged with the client as the applications team identified the right FTE to ultimately assume the niche role, and then to mentor the identified FTE so that she could be most effective in supporting and enhancing a complex and fast-paced specialty application.

In the continued spirit of guiding others, she shares her experiences successfully navigating some of the challenges presented during her year-long engagement:

Document Everything

It was challenging for her to gain a thorough understanding of existing workflows and identify opportunities to optimize processes and maximize Beacon functionality. The majority of the historical knowledge regarding previous build decisions and request tracking was stored in the mind of the now-departed Beacon Analyst.

Immediately, defined processes were implemented to track ticket requests, run meetings, track build decisions and progress and standardized documentation tools were identified to create a living team record. She collaborated with operational teams over time to define and refine additional processes, which maximized communication to identify gaps and potential solutions. Under this framework, new members of both applications teams and operational/clinical teams will have access to documentation for historical build decisions and requests, eliminating unnecessary time wasted completing troubleshooting and rework and maximizing time spent enhancing application utilization in a meaningful way.

Embrace Challenge as a Catalyst to Innovation

Consultants learn quickly to plan for the unexpected in their engagements. Even a consultant as seasoned as ours didn't anticipate a global public health crisis and its subsequent fallout in the spring of 2020. When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the client state of Maryland, care delivery teams and the applications teams supporting them were immediately affected. Oncology and infusion live visits were limited and staff migrated work remotely where possible.

To ensure continuity of care to their patients, the client hospital rolled out telemedicine visits to be utilized by both the oncology clinic and infusion sides of operations. This enhancement required collaboration across multiple teams outside of the Beacon application to rollout a multitude of updates, including Workflow Engine Rules and Beacon Oncology tools for ordering and managing the patient's chemotherapy and non-chemotherapy infusions. After detailed testing with the Ambulatory and Cadence teams, the providers were extremely satisfied with the ability to use telemedicine visits to continue to care for at-risk patients.

Leverage Enhanced Functionality to Maximize Clinical Service Offerings

Throughout the course of her engagement, our consultant played an integral part of many Epic application enhancements that improved clinical and operational process and overall application ROI. Most notable to the clinical oncology team was the introduction of a new Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy (PRRT) workflow. This high-profile project required input and integration from multiple teams, including imaging, pharmacy, and billing. She assumed responsibility for overall project coordination, which included leading operational review and future state workflow determination. The multi-disciplinary work group overcame multiple challenges over the course of several months and were able to implement a successful workflow.

Implementing the PRRT workflow created a streamlined process for nuclear medicine and oncology users and allowed the client facility to offer a new oncology treatment service offering to patients, a treatment that, where appropriate, will identify and attack cancer cells while reducing harm to healthy tissue.

As these examples highlight, the impact of a good Epic Analyst Consultant will far exceed the interim role that they fill, whether they are tasked with bridging an FTE gap or supplementing the manpower of an established team for project-based work. The establishment of consistent and standardized processes for documentation and communication build a foundation through which future efforts will be streamlined and maximize precious client resources. Epic Application Analyst successors and clinical operations teams have been empowered to be agile in times of challenge, driving solutions made by better using the very tools already at their fingertips. An Epic Analyst Consultant has the ability to inject specialty Epic expertise which can only be acquired through years of experience across a multitude of client environments. Through their mentorship, like that provided by our consultant for her client teams, we have the collective opportunity to enhance applications at a pace matching a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape – and keep sharing lessons along the way.

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