



## The OBIX Perinatal Data System improves patient care while reducing staff workload and costs at Port Lavaca, Texas, hospital

*Cloud-based solution puts patients first and lets Memorial Medical Center staff focus less on the paperwork, and network servers*

Saddled with an outdated, barebones fetal monitoring solution, Memorial Medical Center (MMC) in Port Lavaca, Texas, faced an estimated \$160,000 capital expense to upgrade the system and software, expand computer storage, and install integrations to provide much-needed flexibility. The system frustrated nurses and strained strapped IT resources. Beyond that, the staff needed expensive training on a system installed before many of them had started working there.

In short, staff and administrators considered the system “broken.”

“We were just using what we knew how to do,” says Donn Stringo, In-Patient Services Director for MMC. “We had a piece of a system and not a lot of training.”



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### **The Challenge**

Facing tightening fiscal constraints since installing the system seven years earlier, the hospital did what many similarly sized facilities have done. It eliminated multiple levels of in-patient management and consolidated department directors. Staff turnover left little in-house knowledge of the system.

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The hospital’s first fetal monitoring system did not interface with Memorial Medical Center’s electronic medical records. Dealing with different charting systems meant women started in one system during delivery only to be handed off to the other system two hours postpartum. The lack of continuity between the mom’s health and the newborn’s health challenged staff to recognize how the wellbeing of one might be affecting the other.

“The nurses were double charting between two systems,” says Jenise Svetlik, Clinical IT Specialist and Physician Administrator.

Charting was so cumbersome that nurses seldom took time to do it at the bedside. Instead, they retreated to the nurses’ station at the expense of time that could have been spent with their patients. Having just two computers at the nurses’ station, however, forced nurses to toggle between monitoring fetal strips on one while charting patients on the other. If both nurses had labor patients, they took turns completing their documentation.

A cap on the number of workstations also resulted in the loss of a monitor in the staff lounge when that license was needed elsewhere. A plan to expand Labor and Delivery to additional rooms was placed on hold, in part, because it would mean purchasing additional licenses.

### The Solution

What they needed, Svetlik says, was a single integrated system spanning “momma to baby, admission to discharge, perinatal to postpartum.” Physicians and staff needed to have access to 24/7 monitoring from anywhere with internet. IT needed to get out of the business of maintaining computer servers and running backups, which sometimes required the IT director to come in on days off when the automatic backup failed.

By installing the OBIX Perinatal Data System from Clinical Computer Systems Inc. (CCSI), the 25-bed community hospital expanded access to fetal monitoring and implemented advanced charting designed around the labor and delivery workflow. Rather than dictating next steps, the built-in E-Tools of OBIX promote critical thinking by supporting and reinforcing staff experience and building on what they’ve already learned.

The highly secure cloud-based solution gave network administrators real-time backups while eliminating countless rounds of adding expensive servers and upgrades. That translated into cost savings and freed them for other tasks. Hospital administrators enjoyed ready access to patient data and statistical reports, as well as access to unlimited online staff training through OBIX University.

### The Community

Port Lavaca is the county seat of Calhoun County – a county with a population of 22,000 located midway along the 275-mile Gulf Coast. As a coastal community, tourists swell the population by 3,000 or more on any given weekend.

Memorial Medical Center is a 25-bed critical-access facility – the only hospital within a 30-mile radius. Patients come from as far away as Port O’Connor who would otherwise need to travel 53 miles for care.

“A lot of the people we are taking care of would get very little care if we were not here,” Stringo says, noting that many of the OB Department’s patients walk to the hospital from nearby apartments.

Unlike most Texas counties, Calhoun County is one of just five in the state without a hospital tax district to support a county-run health system and fund indigent care. “We are in the business of trying to have a bottom line without financial contribution from the county we are a part of,” Stringo says.

For many critical-access rural hospitals, the expense of operating an OB Department makes delivering babies an annual exercise in cost justification. And MMC is no different. The hospital recorded 130 births in 2017, and each year they must decide whether they can afford to keep the department open.

That said, staff and administrators at MMC understand the OB Department provides a critical service to area residents. And obstetrics represents an opportunity to build trusting relationships with patients who enjoy a positive experience that might lead them to seek healthcare services they otherwise wouldn’t.

So it should be no surprise that when it came time to consider a new perinatal software system, MMC in Port Lavaca was working within a tight budget.

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### The highly secure cloud-based OBIX Perinatal Data System with:

- Superior surveillance display options
- Advanced charting
- Expanded access to fetal monitoring
- Built-in E-Tools promoting patient safety and improved practice
- Multiple interface features with hospital EMR
- Real-time backups and offsite servers
- Ready access to patient data and statistical reports
- On-site training through OBIX University
- No more endless rounds of adding expensive servers and upgrades, translating into cost





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Clevenger puts it more starkly.

“If we hadn’t found OBIX and been forced to stay with the company we were with, I don’t think our Obstetrics Department could have stayed open without drastically reducing staffing or services offered,” she says.

### **The Installation**

As it happened, a 25-bed critical access facility nearby had become the first controlled release site using the OBIX Hosted Solution. MMC staff and administrators traveled there in March 2017 to see it for themselves. They were joined by representatives of CCSI and immediately liked what they saw.

After an initial tour of MMC, CCSI worked with the hospital to map cabling and network drops, run the necessary network cables, verify connections and hook everything together.

The OBIX Communicare Device, a small box about the size of a paperback book, sits in the network closet and handles the secure, trusted connections to the cloud servers. The hospital repurposed most of its existing hardware, enabling it to purchase extra screens and restore the monitor in the staff lounge.

With the system hosted in the cloud, expensive premise-based servers, regular upgrades and constant data backups were no longer needed. Those things are now handled by CCSI, as are software updates and upgrades provided at no additional cost to MMC.

From first seeing the system to installation in Port Lavaca, the entire process took about six months.

“The rollout was the smoothest I’ve ever seen,” Clevenger says. “I’ve been through several startups of different software systems in the hospital and CCSI did an excellent job. They provided very good communication on the frontend before they came down for the launch. They provided more than adequate training. And they made sure every nurse and physician was comfortable with the system before they left.”

### **The Results**

Victoria Broome, an RN in Obstetrics at MMC, counts on the system to guide her through her day. “I depend on it to remind me, for my documentation for laboring patient mom and the baby, my postpartum moms, and the newborns,” says Broome, who has worked in labor and delivery since 1989.

“It’s displaying the fetal monitoring strip – variability and changes in baseline fetal heart rate, and contraction patterns,” she says. “You have to know what’s going on with your mom and your baby – what the baby’s heart rate is doing, uterine activity, and the fetal wellbeing.”

The OBIX system allows her to monitor patients from the bedside, the nurses station or even from another patient’s room. Physicians can log in from their offices at the MMC Clinic across the street if needed for triage.

“We are a small, critical-access hospital that provides OB services in our little community,” Broome says. “The OBIX system allows us to be more personal, active and dedicated to our patients. It enables us to deliver the best possible care rivaling that of any of the surrounding hospitals.”





“Nurses are tied to the computer less than with any system I’ve seen,” Clevenger says. “Just letting us get back to patient care and get our noses out of the computer is the biggest benefit of this system.” Svetlik says she finds the charting features to be user friendly and easier to navigate.

“Now the nurses will take time to chart at the bedside instead of going out to the nurses’ station,” she says. “Patients always see the strips in their room so they ask questions about the baby’s heart rate or their contractions. The nurses are there to educate them, as well.”

Stringo says that more face time with the patient is always good for the patient and facility, translating into better HCAHPS patient satisfaction scores.

“We have time compared to the busy hospitals. We’re not bigger, everything may not be fancier, but we have time for you,” she says.

She said she personally appreciates the ease with which she can access data and pull reports. With the state of Texas pushing facilities to receive designation status in various disciplines, Stringo says the reporting features of the OBIX System save time and money achieving the “mandatory things we have to do to even stay in business.” “Making that simpler and not have nurses manually extracting all that data from the chart is, in itself, a huge labor savings, and in a small hospital labor savings is where it’s at,” she says.

“We don’t have ten people doing quality assurance work. We have a manager and whoever is not busy,” she says. “Reporting is the ticket to more money. It’s the ticket to improved ratings. It’s everything.”

Stringo and others say CCSI worked hard to ensure the OBIX Perinatal Data System works flawlessly and provides MMC with everything it needs.

“From a managerial standpoint, CCSI has been extremely easy to work with,” Stringo says. “What they’ve offered or projected they’ve come through without any delays. I have nothing but good things to say about our relationship with CCSI.”

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