Today's Hospitalist

Infection patrol

Published in the June 2008 issue of Today's Hospitalist

TheraDoc®

GIVEN REPORTS that as many as 2 million patients in the U.S. each year develop nosocomial infections, hospitals are looking for ways to speed up the diagnosis of infections and intervene more quickly.

Infection control software marketed by a company called TheraDoc now helps make that earlier identification. The software combs through hospital data related to admissions, discharges and transfers; labs and microbiology; pharmacy, radiology and surgery; and ventilator days and patients with lines.

The software provides what Scott Walker calls an "archaeological view," allowing physicians to discern past and emerging infection patterns. More importantly, the software delivers infection data—and alerts—in real time. That enables physicians to take preventive measures and intervene by placing patients admitted with a history of MRSA, for instance, in isolation. It also allows hospitals to save money on hiring infection control nurses.

TheraDoc's software and database capabilities are compatible with all hospital information technology systems. "We like to say that we're vendor agnostic," says Mr. Walker, TheraDoc's vice president of strategic development. "We don't really care what information system you have because we can interface with and pull data from any of them."

The company, which is privately owned and based in Salt Lake City, was founded in 1999 by a clinical pharmacist who spent years working with infectious disease specialists at LDS Hospital to explore how computers could be harnessed to reveal infection patterns.

The TheraDoc modules are being used in about 185 hospitals in 31 states, Mr. Walker says. One of those hospitals—University of Pittsburgh Medical Center—is also a business partner. Startup costs for a 250-bed hospital run between $200,000 and $300,000, with yearly costs of $75,000.

There are several other TheraDoc software modules including one—which hospitals typically use in tandem with the infection control module—that monitors antibiotic prescribing patterns and effectiveness. One module being developed will focus on anticoagulation. More information is available online at www.theradoc.com.