

MAINE Biz
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Platform pioneer

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When Bill McQuaid, chief information officer at Parkview Adventist Medical Center in Brunswick, began the process of overhauling the hospital's IT system, he ran into some skepticism. Making the switch from a multi-vendor, paper-based system to a single-vendor, electronic system was unusual for a small, 55-bed hospital. Plus the timeline and scope of the project were daunting for a six-person staff.

That was in 2004, and now, six years later, the hospital has a sophisticated health information system that has attracted visitors from 10 states and four countries looking to do the same at their hospital. Parkview has earned recognition from Chicago-based Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Analytics, scoring in the second highest category for its electronic medical records adoption scale. Only 92 hospitals out of the nation's 5,000-plus are so ranked, and Parkview is one of the smallest.

The IT system has also earned McQuaid, 37, some overdue attention. In February, he was named one of five finalists for Chief Security Officer of the Year by *SC Magazine*, a publication for computer security professionals. Last month, *ComputerWorld* magazine listed McQuaid as one of the country's 100 premier IT leaders, sending him to Phoenix to hobnob with the other honorees.

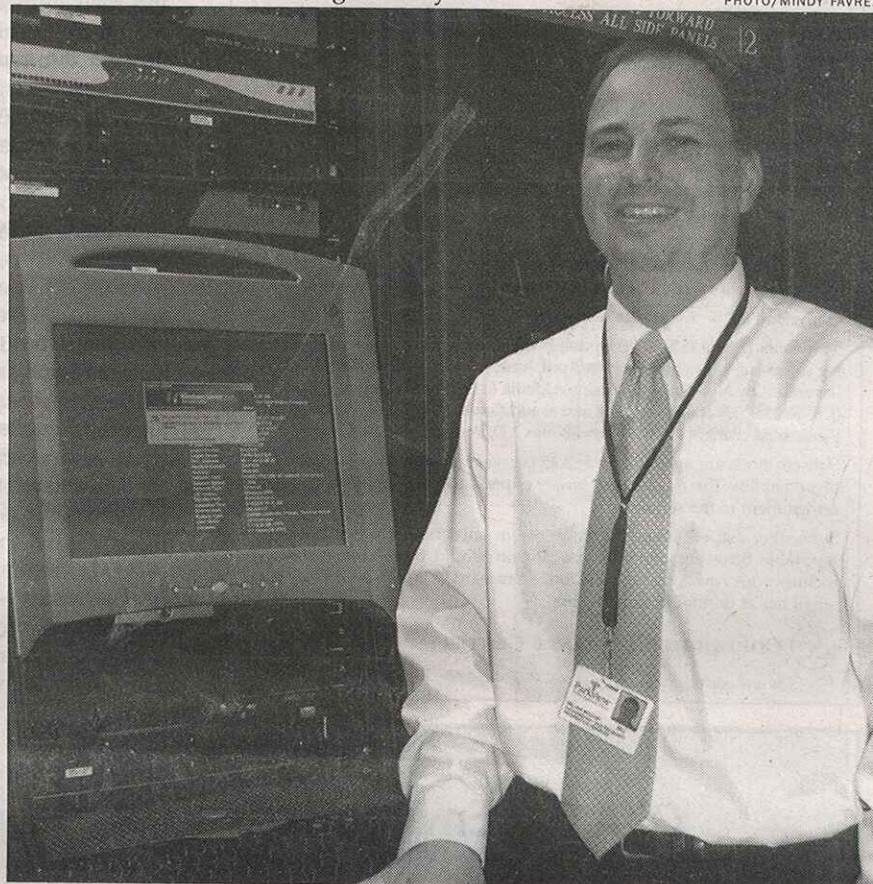
Though the new system has been in place for five years, it and McQuaid are both in the national spotlight now, as the push for electronic health information systems ramps up. Last year, President Obama announced an initiative that requires all hospitals to support electronic medical records within five years. "What we thought was common sense in 2005 will be mandated by 2015," says McQuaid.

The system from Massachusetts-based MEDITECH cost a little over \$1 million and went live — "the Big Bang," as McQuaid calls it — in August 2005, after nine months of implementation, a record for all of MEDITECH's customers who tackle it in-house. All the hospital's departments — registration, billing, the pharmacy, etc. — are linked electronically and provide real-time stats on every patient. Features like electronic bar coding, which allows nurses to scan a barcode on a patient's wristband and get medication information, and fingerprint log-ins at every computer ensure safety and security, McQuaid says. "It was a lot for a small hospital, but I didn't want to limit our functionality because we're small."

Thinking big will pay off. The savings from maintenance costs on multiple vendors will pay for the project in five years. The new system also qualifies Parkview to receive \$3.6 million in additional Medicare funding under part of the federal stimulus bill, aimed at hospitals making strides in electronic medical records.

As one of the 2% of hospitals in the country near the top of HIMSS Analytics' scale, Parkview holds a rare spot — it's one of seven in New England and the only one in Maine. Other Maine hospitals have come to scope out all or parts of Parkview's system, including St. Mary's, Mercy and Franklin Memorial. McQuaid says the hospital is preparing for the top stage of the HIMSS Analytics' scale, but can't get there until the requirements are finalized. In the meantime, the hospital is launching a new program that will allow physicians' offices that use Parkview for lab tests to integrate their systems with the hospital; for a small fee, doctors will be able to send and receive records and lab tests. Parkview has signed on two practices as a beta trial.

For McQuaid, a Topsham native and former L.L.Bean information services employee, the project offers personal satisfaction. "How many times do you get the opportunity to build something from the ground up? Instead of fixing up an old house, we were able to just blow it up and put a new foundation in." ■



Bill McQuaid expects the \$1 million information system he helped engineer for Parkview Adventist Medical Center in Brunswick will pay for itself within five years.

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