Learning from the
Most Wired hospitals

A lot has been invested in information technology (IT), and more is needed. What is the return? Increasingly, the return is measured not only in financial terms but in the value added to clinical and operational processes.

“Hospitals are telling us they have an insatiable appetite for data, to track their core measures as well as to go in and look for opportunities to improve care,” says Alden Solovy, associate publisher and executive editor of Hospitals & Health Networks. Each year, H&HN names the 100 Most Wired Hospitals and Health Systems based on its IT survey.

Solovy will speak about how progressive organizations are harnessing IT at the OR Business Management Conference May 9 to 11 in Savannah, Ga. In a general session on Friday morning, he will highlight this year’s results and share how the Most Wired are using IT in surgical services.

The survey focuses on 5 areas:
• quality and safety
• customer service
• business processes
• public health and safety
• workforce management.

For the past few years, H&HN has mined the results to see if there is a relation between IT excellence and clinical quality. The 2005 results were the strongest, showing the Most Wired had, on average, risk-adjusted mortality rates 7.2% lower than other hospitals. In 2006, risk-adjusted mortality was 1.6% lower.

“This is probably the first systemic evidence of an association between quality and excellence in IT,” Solovy says.

IT for strategic management

Solovy interviewed leaders of the Most Wired organizations to see how they are using IT systems for strategic management for his report (July H&HN).

Compared with others, the Most Wired are more paperless, make wider use of digital imaging, employ more telemedicine, and provide more IT educational resources for staff.

They use a wider array of IT tools to address quality and safety, their physicians enter significantly larger percentages of orders themselves, and the hospitals conduct a larger percentage of clinical transactions using information technology.

CIOs he interviewed say they view information systems as a key component of quality improvement. QI teams employ IT systems, for example, to help reduce steps in a process, streamline handoffs, and achieve quicker cycle times. Information systems also aid communication, which lies at the root of many medical errors, because clinicians have access to more complete and accurate information.

Solovy will talk about how IT advances carry over to the surgical suite. One of the Most Wired hospitals, for example, is video-recording surgical procedures. The videos are analyzed to see what the teams with the best outcomes are doing differently. From this, the hospital is developing best practices. Others use information systems to drive better compliance with clinical protocols such as those for prevention of deep vein thrombosis.

The Most Wired survey is made possible through a partnership by H&HN,
Accenture, McKesson, the American Hospital Association, and the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives.

The conference brochure will be posted at www.ormanager.com in late January and mailed to subscribers in February.