Cantonal hospital transformation

In 2022, the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen (KSSG) completed one of the largest hospital-based IT projects in Switzerland. Together with the three local hospital networks and the Geriatric Clinic, it migrated to SAP S/4HANA, thus laying the foundation for a new hospital information system.

In 2022, the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen successfully completed a pioneering IT project in the Swiss hospital sector. The hospital network migrated to the most recent SAP system landscape S/4HANA, thereby consolidating eight hospitals into one fully integrated system unit. The central master data was also standardised during this process and will be managed by a central master data team in the future. The change represents a significant leap from a specialist application that offered limited enhancement opportunities to an interactive, innovation-driven application available to all hospital employees.

Initial situation

With eight hospitals, 50 clinics and 6200 employees, the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen (KSSG) is one of the largest hospital networks in Switzerland. It works in close collaboration with the three hospital networks Rheintal Werdenberg Sarganserland, Linth and Fürstenland Toggenburg, as well as the Geriatric Clinic St.Gallen, to ensure the provision of primary medical care throughout the canton. Every injection, every drug dispensed and every scalpel order is a cog in a massive machine that needs to continue functioning perfectly year in, year out.

Central master data management
To guarantee this level of service provision, the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen relies on a targeted medicine strategy and forward-looking, efficient processes, as Michael Stahlberger, head of IT at KSSG, explains: 'We pursue an IT strategy that allows us to take advantage of opportunities for growth and respond to future developments.' One key element of the IT landscape is the centralisation of distributed master data storage. Previously, each hospital network was responsible for storing its own data. 'Every visit to a different hospital location meant that all patient data had to be recorded again.'

Michael Stahlberger,
Head of IT at the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen

Objective

To achieve a uniform data structure suitable for long-term use, the KSSG decided to bring the entire ERP landscape fully up to date and connect all four hospital networks and the Geriatric Clinic to a modern IT system. This decision resulted in a pioneering IT project that broke new ground in the Swiss hospital sector. The KSSG is the first Swiss hospital to use the 'bluefield' transformation process to migrate from SAP ECC to SAP S/4HANA, which enabled it to consolidate the four hospital networks and Geriatric Clinic into one integrated unit. The bluefield method brings together the best elements of the greenfield and brownfield approaches. Important information is migrated across from the old system, while superfluous data is left behind.

Modern hospital information system
As the business representative and project manager for financial aspects, Tanja Hilber was closely involved in the migration project. 'The main objective was to clean up and standardise our master data while bringing the hospitals fully up to date with the latest SAP technology. Through the update to SAP S/4HANA, we have created the ideal basis for further developments and future innovations.' The preconfigured Industry Solution Healthcare (IS-H) software is easily integrated with SAP S/4HANA. Designed specifically for hospitals, this industry solution provides highly integrated patient management in both an in-patient and out-patient setting.

Prioritising data
The Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen migrated only the most important data to the new system.

↑ Alongside the update to the IT backbone, KSSG is also modernising all aspects of its infrastructure. This once-in-a-generation construction project is planned to be completed by 2028.

← From storeroom to operating theatre: material procurement is mapped in SAP S/4HANA.

Solution

For end users, the change to SAP S/4HANA represents a leap forward to an interactive, innovation-driven application. As one of the project partners, KSSG selected SAP partner Swisscom. According to Michael Stahlberger, the clear delineation of responsibilities was one of the success factors: 'Swisscom devised the entire concept for our digital transformation, and took over all customizing and the IS/H consolidation. With its huge wealth of experience, Swisscom ensured we were ready for S/4HANA.'

New system landscape

Since January 2022, all hospitals in St.Gallen have had a new IT backbone in the form of SAP S/4HANA. 670 cleanly migrated interfaces provide end-to-end processes between the ERP system, hospital information system and IS-H industry solution. According to Stahlberger, the successful go-live can be attributed in part to the orderly preparation phase. 'Everything that could be arranged prior to the cutover, such as consolidation or harmonisation processes, had to be completed by the cutover date. There simply wasn't time for this during go-live.'

'Through the update to SAP S/4HANA, we have created the ideal basis for further developments and future innovations.'

Tanja Hilber
Project Manager Finance, Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen

Benefits

The pioneering project was completed on schedule and all 6200 employees at KSSG were able to start working with the new system. The clean master database and the networking of different hospital regions has simplified patient management enormously, according to Tanja Hilber: 'Since data is now available in all hospital regions, patient information doesn't have to be recorded again following a transfer.'
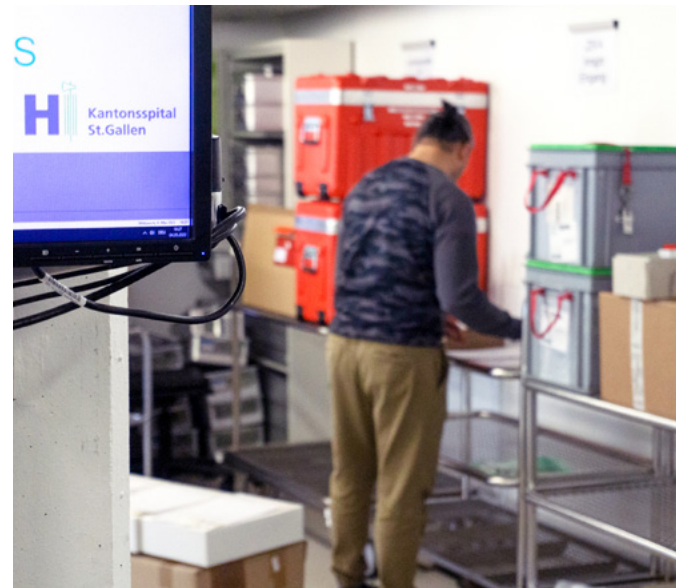
No process interruptions
The migration phase did not see a single interruption to day-to-day work, a fact that particularly impressed René Turnheer, CFO at KSSG: 'Following the test migration, lots of people said they hadn't noticed anything. Which was precisely our objective. During the migration, we didn't experience a single interruption to our routine work – whether patient support or financial accounting. Our advice to other hospital networks engaging in similar projects would therefore be to draw on sufficient external resources.'

Future innovations
KSSG has laid the technological basis for all future innovation steps. 'From a long-term perspective, the new technology enables us to introduce innovations like Fiori apps in subsequent projects. This will simplify processes, standardise user interactions and allow us to automate processes. Thanks to the transparent data flows, we can now also see the mutual interactions and influences between individual departments, such as how material flows affect invoicing. This information will enable us to continually optimise processes, which ultimately saves on time and costs,' says CFO René Turnheer.

The new system enables transparent data flows between different hospital networks in St.Gallen.

About the Cantonal Hospital St.Gallen
- Sector: Healthcare
- Employees: 6200
- Users: 2400

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