

Automated Web-based System Puts Law Firm in Total Control of High-Volume Medical Records Retrieval

Building on a strong track record of success in asbestos case litigation, Levin, Simes and Kaiser moved strongly into pharmaceutical mass tort cases. As they did, the outsourced medical records retrieval solution they were using became completely unworkable and unmanageable.

Today, with MediConnect's RapidRetrieve™ web-based solution, they are in total control of a process that smoothly requests and delivers multiple thousands of records annually with total transparency into record status and cost at every step along the way.

The Problem

To efficiently pursue large pharmaceutical cases, Levin Simes and Kaiser needed to significantly improve its capacity to quickly and economically obtain essential client medical records. A pharmaceutical case inventory could include 1,500 or more clients, each possibly requiring 2 to 4 separate medical charts. This type of volume required a highly automated system that would be efficient, low cost, and easily managed.

Additionally, the firm is a leader in employing electronic documents. Attorneys touch as few papers as possible, so any paper-based systems are a hindrance to that flow. Levin Simes and Kaiser had initially utilized various other retrieval companies for their needs. This solution presented a number of serious problems, including:

- **Slow, manual process.** Everything from initial request through final delivery of records was paper-based. The process was slow, cumbersome and inefficient.
- **Non-electronic format.** "We like technology – we want everything in the computer," said John Pashby of Levin Simes and Kaiser. "Every so often, a box of paper copies of medical records would show up from one of our suppliers, and we'd have to scan them into the system by hand. Some medical charts are huge, so this represented a major cost and bottleneck for our firm."
- **Lack of tracking visibility.** Once records were ordered, there was no way to track a request's progress, estimate arrival time or expedite an order short of making a number of phone calls to the provider to check status. This was a major issue for both staff and attorneys who often need to know when records can be expected. Additionally, a number of requests would get "stuck" with certain providers, and without additional calls and reminders, these requests would never be fulfilled. "We gave up calling our supplier to check status – we knew they wouldn't have the answer," said Pashby.
- **Cost.** Each request was charged a high flat-fee for initiation, with all processing expenses added on (copies, postage, etc.) plus any fees charged by providers over and above a standard amount. Some records could end up costing hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars, even in states with statutory cost limits.
- **Client billing headaches.** When a case settled, the firm's accounting department had to do a lot of extra work matching up invoices for medical records to specific cases and clients in order to complete client billing and settlement.
- **Control.** The firm felt that with all of these factors combined, there was no control of the system. "I had no way of knowing how much a record was going to cost, or when we'd get it," said Pashby. "It was a very uncomfortable position to be in with so much riding on this critical piece of our case workflow."

L E V I N
S I M E S
K A I S E R &
G O R N I C K
L L P
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

- San Francisco, CA
- Asbestos plaintiff, pharmaceutical mass tort
- Reputation built on successful asbestos cases; current emphasis is pharmaceutical mass tort.
- 5,000 - 10,000 records per year

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*-John Pashby
Levin, Simes, Kaiser
& Gornick LLP*

(Continued)

The MediConnect Solution

Pashby and his team selected MediConnect based on a number of critical factors. "MediConnect met each of our key selection criteria, including electronic, on-line processing and records delivery, national scope, quick turnaround time and attractive cost."

Levin Simes and Kaiser quickly implemented RapidRetrieve™, MediConnect's powerful web-based solution providing access to all of its sophisticated tools, resources, and capabilities. From any computer with an internet connection, company staff can:

- Manage all aspects of medical records retrieval quickly and easily.
- Initiate new requests.
- Track the status of pending or past requests.
- Download completed records.
- Order additional services, such as customized Bates/page stamping, medical record sorting, indexing, and medical record reports and summaries.

Additionally, RapidRetrieve™ provides a flexible, effective interface to the firm's internal case management system. RapidRetrieve's import capability allows information to move directly into the case management system and initiate new requests directly into RapidRetrieve.

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The Outcome

The MediConnect solution has exceeded the firm's expectations on each of its original search criteria.

- **Control.** "The biggest factor for me is that now I have total control," said Pashby. "Today, with the touch of a button, I can find out the exact status of any request, I know what my costs are going to be, and I can expedite, narrow, expand or cancel requests instantly. I can't tell you what that does for our workflow and for our attorneys' peace of mind."
- **Instant Access.** MediConnect provides instant access to a complete log of all activity regarding any request, including dates and times of contact with providers, content of conversations, and follow-up items. "I don't know how they do it – tracking all those orders every few days on the phone. MediConnect gets it done!" said Pashby.
- **Easy to Use.** The simple interface and built-in "smarts" of the system have streamlined request initiation and interaction. For example, when ordering a new record, much of the request is pre-filled from baseline client information, and other information is readily accessible from comprehensive drop-down menus. "Before MediConnect, to request a CT scan record for a client, we had to write a separate letter, including all the details. Today, it takes one click in RapidRetrieve," said Pashby.
- **Cost.** "The cost control feature is very important to our firm," said Pashby. "Not only is MediConnect's base cost incredibly low, but I can implement company policy on cost limit approvals. Any request that would exceed the established limit is flagged and put on hold for my approval. I can then decide whether to approve the order as-is, narrow the request, or call the provider and remind them of the statutory limit on medical records charges. I've never been surprised by a bill or received something I didn't want."
- **Billing.** The MediConnect solution has also gained strong support in the firm's accounting department. With the ability to assign each request to a specific account number by client, calculating medical record costs to the penny is a simple matter when each case settles.
- **Personnel.** Probably the greatest impact on the firm is the ability to efficiently pursue larger mass tort cases. "This is like going from searching case law in books, to performing a search on Lexis – one could potentially take weeks or months, the other takes a few seconds," said Pashby. Pashby estimates that the firm would have to hire 3 to 4 more people plus outsource all the scanning to keep up with what MediConnect is delivering today. "To pursue these large pharmaceutical cases, we simply couldn't go back to what we were using before."

