



Shipping



pitney bowes 

Rethinking the way hospitals send and receive

How to solve the biggest pain
points of sending and receiving
packages and mail in hospitals



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Hospitals today are increasingly busy.



The pace extends beyond patient care. Hospitals are also busy hubs of sending and receiving activity.

From sensitive patient mailings to pharmaceutical shipments, hospitals send and receive in overwhelmingly large capacities. As patients, supplies, packages and sensitive mail move through the hospital system, they need to be carefully monitored and tracked.

Hospitals frequently receive inbound packages, whether that's medical supplies entering through a docking area, or flowers for a patient delivered through the reception desk. With so many points of entry and so many different moving parts, it can be challenging to ensure that everything gets to its proper destination in the expected timeframe.

At the same time, healthcare costs are on the rise. But, some of them are avoidable. Many hospitals have inefficient sending and receiving processes, and they pay the price in lost time and operating expenses. Hospitals today need clearer visibility into all their shipping, mailing and receiving operations, so they can keep patients, healthcare providers and administrative staff happy, all while keeping an eye on their bottom line.



\$500,000/yr

the average yearly shipping costs for one hospital¹



\$750 billion/yr

the amount the U.S. spends on expenses not directly linked to healthcare, like shipping and mailing²

1. Beckers Hospital Review <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/finance/9-ingenious-ways-to-cut-costs-at-your-hospital.html>
2. Institute of Medicine <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2012/Best-Care-at-Lower-Cost-The-Path-to-Continuously-Learning-Health-Care-in-America.aspx>

What's the way out?

Operational costs are high in hospitals, but they don't have to be.

There's another way to approach shipping and receiving in hospitals. Operational costs tend to be high because administrative staff are used to doing things the way they always have. That might mean always picking the same shipping provider for sending parcels, regardless of the variation in contents, destination, necessary delivery timeframe, and even cost.

Some hospital staff, perhaps overwhelmed with the large number of options available, simply choose the wrong carrier services. For others, the issue is reliance on ingrained processes and services despite their costs.

Better visibility into your shipping and receiving helps improve these operations, so hospitals aren't shipping inefficiently simply because that's the way they've always done it. There's a better, smarter way for hospitals to ship and receive. It all starts with knowing who's sending what throughout the hospital system.

Researchers from Harvard University and London School of Economics and Political Science [compared healthcare spending](#) in the US to that of 10 other similar countries. Administrative costs contributed significantly to the US's high healthcare spending.

Administrative and governance expenditures, as a percentage of GDP³:



3. Irene Papanicolas, PhD; Liana R. Woskie, MSc; Ashish K. Jha, MD, MPH
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2674671?resultClick=1>



Managing the overall shipping and mailing operation

Hospital sending operations range from chaotic to organized, but everyone has room for improvement when it comes to compliance.

In some hospitals, anyone in the building can send whatever they want, whenever they want, using any method. There's nothing stopping a staffer from shipping all his packages via overnight mail from the front desk, simply because that's how he's always done it.

Not only is this incredibly inefficient and likely more expensive than necessary, it also raises concerns about compliance. There's no visibility into the process. Hospitals that have been penalized for a HIPAA violation in the past, however, tend to have learned from their mistakes and created a designated team to manage all shipping and mailing, so they're more likely to be compliant.

What's the ideal setup? Ship request forms help ensure all operations are compliant and cost-effective by streamlining the process and establishing centralized management. You fill out a form via a simple app with information about your package, recipients, preferred arrival time and any special instructions, and deliver that form and package to the designated sender. That way, the hospital has full visibility and control over what they're sending and how they are sending it.



359

reported HIPAA
violations in 2017⁴



\$100 to \$1.5 million

range of potential HIPAA fines
for violations⁵

4. HIPAA Journal <https://www.hipaajournal.com/common-hipaa-violations/>

5. Beckers Hospital Review <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/10-common-hipaa-violations-and-preventative-measures-to-keep-your-practice-in-compliance.html>

Get smarter about selecting mail services.

Hospitals tend to rely heavily on Certified Mail® for their sending needs.

When do hospitals really need to send via Certified Mail®?

Certified Mail® is useful for sending secure documents, but it can be cumbersome and costly to manage. For example, Certified Mail traditionally required the use of paper “green cards” for proof of receipt. The cards are filled out by hand, torn off, and then, once processed, are mailed back to the sender. These green cards, aka, proof of receipt, can easily become lost, either during the mailing or filing process.

Electronic return receipts (ERRs) allow hospitals to create an electronic file for proof of receipt. Senders can receive e-signatures for proof of an item being received, and can file everything away electronically; plus there is a significant cost savings when using electronic return receipt.

If you’re sending a legal document, a past-due notice or anything else that could have legal implications down the road and or if it’s required to obtain a signature, Certified Mail® with Electronic Return Receipt is the right choice.



What is Certified Mail®?

Certified Mail® is a USPS® service that lets customers send critical business and legal documents with similar visibility and accountability. Customers are given a receipt for proof of mailing and will also be notified when a delivery attempt was made. Additionally, customers can opt for proof of delivery by receiving the recipient’s electronic signature or they can be sent a postcard signed by the recipient.

\$670 million

revenue generated from Certified Mail® in FY 2016, the most of any Ancillary Services

197 million

the pieces of mail that included Certified Mail® in 2016⁶

6. USPS Office of the Inspector General
<https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2017/RARC-WP-18-002.pdf>

Gain better chain of custody over medical documentation.



Hospitals must intelligently manage all courier shipments, especially where sensitive data is involved.

Whether a hospital is sending patient health records, lab results, or other legal documents within its organization or across other networks and clinics, the chain of custody must remain secure. Just because a standard shipping method has a tracking number, it does not necessarily mean that the items in the package are secure.

Mail tracking can not only bring time and cost savings, but it will also help hospitals stay compliant with federal regulations, such as HIPAA. Even with the implementation of electronic health records (EHRs), hospitals may still need to occasionally send physical copies of lab results, usually if requested by the patient.

For example, a hospital may need to send physical copies of a patient's record to another clinic. Having special delivery instructions and a specified arrival time can help. Any gaps in the chain of custody could potentially lead to a HIPAA violation.

Centralized delivery can also help eliminate duplicate testing, which would cost a hospital time and money. Should lab results not be delivered promptly, or be brought to the wrong location within a hospital, a provider may be left with no choice but to run the tests again.

Tracking the movement of pharmaceuticals

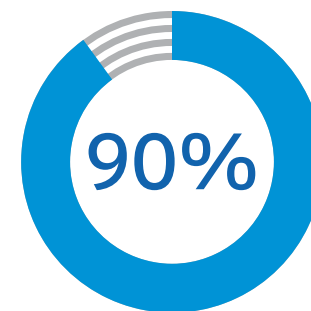


Hospitals need to take extra care when shipping pharmaceuticals and medicines.

Staff must ensure that the right medications are sent to the right facilities, arrive on time, and are stored and transported at the correct temperature the entire trip.

Patient lives could depend on a specific drug, and continued drug shortages are [costing the healthcare industry](#). Drug shortages may require providers to ration supplies, delay or compromise medical procedures, and could even lead to medication errors.

Hospitals must accurately track all pharmaceutical shipments and deliveries, otherwise they may end up spending more money should items become lost or unaccounted for. Organizations can also cut back on costs through improved visibility in transporting medical supplies.



Percentage of C-suite executives indicating that drug shortages will be a hospital problem over the next three years.⁷

7. Premier Inc. Economic Outlook survey
<https://learn.premierinc.com/pharmacy-and-research/17202-eo-pr-infographic-v4>

Track physical assets within the hospital.

Visibility isn't just about mailing and shipping. It's also about asset control.

Equipment in today's hospitals is largely mobile. Everything from hospital beds to IV poles can be wheeled from one location to the next, moving with the patient as he/she is transported along the care process. But how do you keep track of those assets as they move throughout the hospital?

Comprehensive asset management ensures that hospitals know where all of their assets – whether it be a hospital bed or medical device – were last located. Similar to how books are tracked within libraries, hospitals can create barcodes that indicate where an item is meant to be. Then, if a bed is not in the right place, they can scan its barcode and find out that the bed belongs in room 17.

The result? Clinicians and staff members will be spending less time searching for pieces of equipment and can devote more time to patient care.





Patient care is always the top priority of hospitals

Hospitals are busy, but that does not mean that shipping and mailing needs should be an afterthought.

Hospitals can improve their visibility in key areas to simplify sending and receiving and ensure that they send packages and mail faster and more reliably. Hospitals can also gain visibility and trackability into pharmaceutical supplies and medical equipment while saving money.

Having greater control over mail and packages will help hospitals stay HIPAA compliant, while also helping facilities avoid duplicate testing and sending multiple copies of patient records. Additionally, hospitals can improve asset control by keeping tabs on medical equipment as it is moved throughout the hospital.

Working with a trusted Carrier Management solution provider can ensure that patients, providers, and administrative staff are all kept in the loop with the mailing, shipping, and tracking processes. An efficient and compliant partner with expertise in shipping, mailing and receiving will help hospitals intelligently manage courier needs, maintain their bottom line, and provide proper patient care.

Pitney Bowes enables full visibility into your mailing and shipping process.

Pitney Bowes has a library of content that will help you get up to speed on shipping news, issues and best practices, and utilize that information for your hospital shipping needs.

Our knowledge is backed by 90+ years of innovation helping clients navigate the complex world of mailing and shipping. We can help you discover the solutions you need to improve efficiency and cut costs.

Learn more about our solutions for enterprise shipping and asset tracking.

SendPro® Enterprise

SendSuite® Tracking Online





For more information, call 800 327 8627
or visit us online: pitneybowes.com/us/shipping