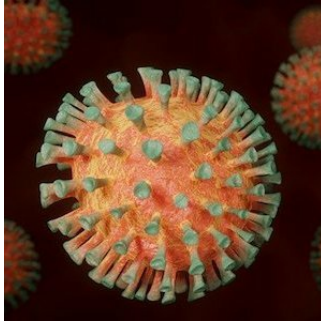## Preparing IT Departments for COVID-19

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, medical and support staff at hospitals maybe stretched thin but they soldier on, finding ways to cope with unprecedented challenges.

In this time of public health crisis, as noted by Henning Schneider, CIO, Asklepios Kliniken, Germany, all hospital units and departments are pulling together in a joint effort to help the sick. It's also during this challenging time that IT teams need to ensure that hospital IT systems are running robustly, as well as securely.

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Schneider says that IT departments can be better prepared for COVID-19 by doing the following steps:

1. Ensure that IT personnel stay in the hospital and work with clinicians to understand what is most urgently needed on site.

Hospitals around the world are preparing for a flux of patients infected by the coronavirus. As they suspend elective procedures and enhance the discharge process for medically fit patients in order to ramp up capacities, hospitals' IT departments should identify ways of how to best support hospital staff perform their jobs.

2. Support management to make informed decisions by generating data – eg, number of free ICU beds or of patients admitted in the ER.

Sharing of best practices in dealing with the coronavirus is important. Schneider has consulted with colleagues from Italy to understand their key challenges and shares these insights within the Asklepios network of clinics, as well as with other hospitals across Germany. He has also communicated outside Europe, specifically in the U.S., and has shared learnings on how to prepare for the outbreak.

3. Focus on functioning operations, especially measures around enhanced communication and collaboration tools (Skype, etc).

IT departments may need to provide capabilities to work from home and offer medical staff secure access from outside the hospital. To this end, extended internet capacities are key, according to Schneider, noting the ever increasing need for digitalisation of healthcare delivery. "Post-crisis healthcare delivery will be significantly different than before the crisis. Particularly the role video consultations, which will not disappear afterwards," he said.

Source: Healthcare IT News

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