Although centralized distribution is still the most common model for medication distribution, the number of hospitals moving to hybrid and decentralized distribution models continues to grow. The devices used for medication distribution reflect this trend, as hospitals report an increase in the number of automated dispensing cabinets, pneumatic tubes, mobile computerized workstations, and in-room medication cabinets in use this year.

For more information on medication distribution vendors, circle reader service numbers 902, 903, 914, and 916 or visit www.findit.pppmag.com

Current Models for Medication Distribution

Distribution Models in Facilities Using BCMA

Distribution Models by Facility Size (in number of beds)

Devices Used for Medication Distribution

As predicted last year, there is a continuing shift away from the centralized medication distribution model toward the hybrid and decentralized models.

Larger hospitals are more likely to use the hybrid model, while the centralized model remains popular with smaller hospitals. The decentralized model is used fairly consistently across all bed sizes.

In comparison to 2007, there has been an increase in the number of devices used for medication distribution, reflecting the move toward increasing automation. ADCs, pneumatic tubes, COWs, and in-room medication cabinets have all enjoyed growth over the last year. (Couriers were not included in last year’s survey.) Use of automated medication carts remained stable this year, while the use of medication carts declined.
The trend away from the centralized medication distribution model is quite pronounced. While the popularity of the decentralized model will continue to grow, the hybrid approach to medication distribution is predicted to be the most widely used in the next five years.

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Overall satisfaction rates for hybrid and decentralized distribution models are very high, at 97% and 96%, respectively. Satisfaction rates for centralized models were somewhat lower at 89%. It is interesting to note that decentralized models received more “excellent” ratings (27%) than did hybrid models (15%) or centralized models (9%).

The larger the hospital, the more likely it will be to take a hybrid approach to medication distribution over the next five years. While predicted to decrease overall, the centralized model is likely to be most widely used by those hospitals with fewer than 100 beds.