Healthcare Solutions - Southcoast Health System - Case Study

Southcoast Health System is a not-for-profit healthcare provider headquartered in New Bedford, Massachusetts. With three hospitals, 27 physician offices, a cancer center, urgent care facilities, labs and radiology centers, and a visiting nurses’ service, Southcoast is a rapidly growing healthcare service provider in New England. The organization employs approximately 7,000 workers, including 300 physicians and 250 visiting nurses, and it provides a wide range of medical services at each campus to streamline the patient care experience. Southcoast’s mission is to provide “advanced care, close to home” for the communities it serves.

The Challenge: Delivering a consistent patient experience and protecting privacy in a growing, distributed and mobile environment

Southcoast’s goal is to grow aggressively while delivering an exceptional patient experience in increasingly distributed settings, including newly built outpatient centers and recently acquired physician practices. To recruit and retain top medical staff and provide excellent care, the organization wanted to give physicians, visiting nurses and staff seamless, uniform access to patient health records as they move among facilities, regardless of the device used. Recognizing a growing risk of data breaches, Southcoast also wanted to help ensure the security of patient information. To address these diverse clinical, business and security goals while keeping operational overhead costs low, Southcoast needed to invest in the right IT infrastructure.

The Solution: Implementing an integrated EMR system and building the simple, secure-by-design mobile workspace that clinicians require

Reaching its goals began with a decision to replace best-of-breed applications with a rich, integrated electronic medical record (EMR) solution from Epic. Now physicians and nurses can seamlessly access and view the same patient data as they move among facilities. “Whether physicians log in from the office or the hospital, they employ the same user ID to access Epic,” says Mark Lacombe, director of information technology at Southcoast. “Practitioners see the same patient information, whether a patient is in the hospital or has been discharged to our visiting nurses service.”

Southcoast also decided to give clinicians access from their device of choice. Yet with so many personal mobile devices and the diverse laptops and PCs owned by the health system, Southcoast needed an integrated platform that met both the ease-of-use requirements of clinicians and the security mandates of the business. “We have roughly 6,000 PCs and 800 laptops in the network,” says Lacombe. “Pushing data out to mobile devices without compromising security was a big concern.”

The organization turned to its longtime partner Citrix for an integrated solution, choosing Citrix XenApp and Citrix XenDesktop as the foundation to deliver its integrated EMR system plus 50 other clinical and nonclinical applications. The environment runs on the Cisco Unified Computing System platform and uses Citrix NetScaler as a front end. The organization also uses Citrix XenServer for all of the
Citrix environments except Epic. To support its expanded mobile device footprint, Southcoast chose Citrix XenMobile as its enterprise mobility management solution. “Citrix XenMobile handles mobile device management as part of the application, and it also has the flexibility to support our bring-your-own-device policies,” he says. “We can lock devices, wipe data, upgrade and manage devices, and be proactive in case of a security incident—all while creating an intuitive experience for users.”

Key benefits

**Enabling rapid organizational growth and keeping operational overhead at less than 2 percent of annual budget**

Southcoast now has the infrastructure needed to support future acquisitions and growth. The organization can efficiently deploy applications, update and patch software, and add users in just a few clicks, without touching the devices. Yet Southcoast requires only two Citrix engineers, which helps keep operational overhead at less than 2 percent of its annual budget. Maintenance executes while the system is running, nearly eliminating any downtime potential. “Anytime physicians or nurses are faced with system downtime, it impacts patient care,” says Lacombe. “With the Citrix platform, we’re able to refresh, upgrade and advance the environment without ever impacting our business, which operates 24/7, 365 days a year.”

**Quadrupling system usage by taking a clinician-centric approach to information technology**

“One of the reasons we decided on Citrix as our end-to-end platform is that it provides clinicians with a seamless transition from practice to hospital,” says Christian Boucher, Southcoast’s manager of directory services for desktop and mobile engineering. “Users want a simple, uniform experience where they can access patient information across home, hospital and mobile devices. Our goal was to make it as easy as possible without stifling physicians’ workflow, while securing patient information.” Southcoast views clinician and staff adoption as its success metric. Within the first two years after implementation, usage quadrupled, and further growth is expected.

**Proactively protecting sensitive patient information**

With the Citrix solutions, Southcoast keeps patient data safe and ensures sensitive information remains private. The new infrastructure protects against data leakage and controls the influx of new mobile devices, even when clinicians bring their own devices. “Physicians and executives want simplified anytime, anywhere access into a secure workspace,” says Boucher. “In our environment, users simply load the client, log in, and they’re presented with their applications, desktops and tools. By protecting the data, the Citrix tools help us be proactive about security, not reactive. With all the breaches we read about in the news, that’s essential.”

**Looking ahead**

With a rich IT foundation in place that enables physicians, nurses and staff to be mobile and securely access patient data anytime and anywhere, Southcoast will continue to rely on Citrix. “To support our growth strategy, we’re always looking for new ways to expand our mobile and remote access reach,” says Boucher. “As we deploy the Citrix solutions, we’ll continue to enhance the user experience for clinicians, which will help us further improve patient care. Achieving these goals is easier knowing that we have Citrix as a trusted partner.”