

Fallon Clinic

"The Citrix Access Suite solution deployed by Covisia makes it possible for us to centrally support end-user desktops and our key electronic health record application. We expect to more than double the lifespan of our desktops, and the solution gives us improved security so that we can better protect the confidentiality of patient records."

Susan Paul, Director of IS, Fallon Clinic

The Challenge

In 2006, Fallon Clinic decided to further improve patient care and streamline manual data input tasks by implementing Epic System's electronic health record (EHR) application. The new solution would significantly reduce administrative costs and speed-up the process for patient data input and retrieval.

"This new application allows us to improve patient care," said Susan Paul, the Director of IS for Fallon Clinic. "Deploying it and then supporting it properly became a major corporate initiative."

But with 250 physicians and close to 2,000 end-users at 26 locations throughout central Massachusetts, this large-scale application would also require significant technical resources for deployment and support. Fallon Clinic was also concerned with whether the solution would comply with the security requirements dictated by HIPAA.

Because of the critical role that an electronic health records application plays in the healthcare field, Fallon Clinic chose to implement the Epic system on a server farm dedicated to the EHR software. "We needed to assure that we were in full control of the application environment and that we were able to assure full availability of the application," said Paul.

The PC requirements for running the electronic health record application were so hefty that Fallon Clinic was prompted to look for a thin-client type solution. "In addition to reducing the computing power we would need on our end-user PCs, we also wanted to have the ability to centralize IT maintenance of our end-user systems," Paul said. "With almost two thousand users across 26 locations, it would be cost-prohibitive if we had to support the users with on-site technical resources."

The Solution

In searching for an access solution and a solution provider that could deploy and support the software, a key consideration for Fallon Clinic was proven experience.

"We evaluated multiple solutions and solution providers, but we were uncomfortable with those relatively new to the market," Paul explained. "Ultimately, we decided Citrix was the only access solution for us because we wanted a tried-and-true technology. We wanted assurance our system would work without having to go through any major bumps during the initial roll-out."

Fallon Clinic applied the same criteria to the solution provider it chose to deploy the Citrix software. "Covisia demonstrated how they had successfully deployed several Citrix solutions similar to ours," Paul said. "But most importantly, they had deployed Citrix for many healthcare providers. The combination of technical knowledge and industry knowledge offered by Covisia gave us confidence that they could handle our deployment properly."

Key Benefits of Covisia's Deployment of Citrix Access Suite 4.0

- Expected lifespan of PCs extended to six years rather than the typical three years.
- Centralized IT maintenance is more efficient and consumes fewer IT resources, particularly with primary application updates occurring every month.
- Clinicians can work securely from home or on the road with easy access to complete patient information.
- Provides granular control over security issues, especially in relation to controlling printing and file saving from remote sites.

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In deploying Citrix Access Suite 4.0, Fallon Clinic chose to also deploy Citrix modules such as Resource Manager, Secure Gateway and Web Interface. In addition to integrating Citrix with the Epic EHR solution, Covisia also integrated Citrix with Microsoft Internet Explorer, Outlook and Office, as well as Oracle financial software. The Citrix solution runs on 40 Hewlett-Packard blade servers with the Windows Server 2003 operating system. The end-user desktops run with Windows 2000 on Dell PCs.

The Benefits

Fallon Clinic is now fully-deployed on Citrix Access Suite 4.0 as well as Citrix Presentation Server 4.0 and Citrix Access Gateway. The Citrix solution lets Fallon centrally manage the Epic EHR application rather than requiring IT resources to visit remote sites for the management and distribution of application updates. Nearly 75 percent of Fallon's 2,000 employees utilize the Citrix/Epic solution, including doctors, nurses, scheduling coordinators, and IT staff. Third-party vendors also use Citrix to access their own applications for troubleshooting purposes.

"Through the Citrix deployment, we now expect to extend the life of our PCs to six years rather than the typical lifespan of three years," Paul said. "As the Epic application requires more computing power, and as we add new applications, the Citrix technology lets us manage that by adding servers or upgrading the computing power of our servers rather than the end-user workstations. This feature will play a critical role in saving capital expenses as we eventually plan to run all of our clinical applications and back-office applications via Citrix."

Another main benefit offered by the Citrix solution is that it makes IT maintenance much easier. "This is particularly important since Epic releases application updates on a monthly basis," Paul said. "Instead of having to manage remote distribution of these updates and trust that it went flawlessly each time an update occurs, we can apply the updates from our central data center and fully test the success of the updates. Thus we're able to fully assure the reliability of the application."

Additionally, the Citrix solution allows clinicians to work from home or on the road where they can still access the information they need to do their job effectively. This benefit is complemented by the Citrix Advance Access Control features, which have provided Fallon with greater control over security issues, particularly with regards to monitoring printing and file access by remote users. "This is an important feature as it helps us comply with HIPAA regulations," Paul said.

"But most important of all," she emphasized, "the benefits from the combined Citrix and Epic solution that Covisia helped deploy are significant to our patients. Our doctors and nurses can now access a patient's complete medical history in one repository right away. This lets us react faster and deliver healthcare more efficiently. We are seeing better communication now that health record information can be transferred electronically. This eliminates delays, omissions and errors, and it leads to improved patient care."

About Fallon Clinic

Fallon Clinic, an ambulatory healthcare provider with 26 sites across central Massachusetts, was founded in 1929 by Dr. John Fallon and a team of local physicians. As the first group practice in central Massachusetts and as one of the most dynamic and progressive healthcare organizations in the country, Fallon Clinic continues to achieve some of the highest quality-of-care ratings in the country. With more than 250 physicians supported by a staff of almost 2000 employees, the clinic provides comprehensive care for more than one million patient visits a year and is the largest private, multi-specialty group in central Massachusetts.

