In Record Time

Physicians at Advanced Pain Management have more time for their patients after switching to an IP-based virtual private network.

When the broadband network connection at the Advanced Pain Management (APM) clinic in Milwaukee suddenly went down in November 2005, doctors were forced to return to the slow paper-based methods they thought they'd left far behind after they went digital. Without access to servers at the company's main office in Greenfield, Wis., they could not call up patient records on their tablet PCs. Instead, they had to receive paper documents by fax while patient records had to be dictated over the phone and later hand-keyed into patient files.

"It caused havoc," says Nitin Saxena, APM's director of information technology. Judging by how much time and money were wasted as a result of this blip, managing the consequences of a larger outage affecting the company's approximately 200 employees in 28 locations seemed unfathomable.

Saxena told his AT&T Account Team that the clinic not only needed a reliable high-speed network that simplified business continuity, but also a secure one to protect the confidential patient information the clinic was transferring to its new electronic medical records system. The solution: an IP-based virtual private network (VPN) that uses multi-protocol label switching (MPLS). AT&T's IP VPN provides flexible, secure access to the network at each of APM's five surgery centers and 23 office locations. Regardless of the time of day or number of users on the network, doctors and staff know that their connection to the Internet and the clinic's headquarters will be uninterrupted and fast.

More Efficient Care

The new network allows for swifter uploads to the server, thus hastening APM's conversion to electronic medical records (EMRs). APM, which has already converted the records of 3,000 current patients and is now phasing in the use of EMRs for new patients, expects its patient records to be fully automated this year.

"Electronic medical records save our doctors almost an hour a day," says Saxena, explaining that physicians can now access all the medical records they need during a patient visit and can also enter notes into their tablet PCs during the visit rather than waiting until the end of the day to dictate their observations and findings. "This frees them to see more patients or to do other things to improve the practice."

APM's Chairman and Founder Bhupinder Saini, M.D., says EMRs will revolutionize medical practices around the world. "Electronic records will allow physicians to provide the appropriate care more quickly because they have all the necessary information at hand, and it will also free them up to spend more time with their patients," Dr. Saini asserts. Plus, APM can be assured that communications among all of its locations are secure: AT&T's MPLS-based network provides inherent data integrity and privacy, which protects the confidentiality of patient information.

Advanced Pain Management Facts

- **Client Needs**
  A network to support the company's transition to the use of electronic medical records and other applications

- **Technology Solutions**
  A network-based virtual private network linking all of APM's locations at high speeds using AT&T's IP-based VPN, which uses multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) as a backbone

- **Business Value**
  Improved patient care; faster and more cost-effective access to medical records; more efficient employees; and trimmed costs

- **Industry Focus**
  Health care

- **Size**
  Twenty-three offices and five surgery centers in Wisconsin

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More Efficient Operations

Having AT&T as APM's network provider for all its sites enables the staff to use the network seamlessly from any location. And the flexibility of the network has made staff more efficient. For example, APM was able to centralize scheduling and billing in the main office in Greenfield, reducing the need for administrative staff in each office. Outages do not hamper APM's operations as they did before. The IP VPN fully integrates all of APM's locations and applications for reliable business continuity.

The new VPN also provides the flexibility for APM to implement videoconferencing applications so that managers and doctors in one office can talk to staff elsewhere without having to travel to particular locations.

Poised for Expansion

APM's growth was another reason it chose to adopt AT&T's network solution. When Dr. Saini and a fellow pain specialist founded APM in 1996, they employed just two support staff. Today the company has more than 200 employees, including 17 doctors and 11 physician's assistants and nurse practitioners, and has become one of the largest pain centers in the country. APM recently moved its headquarters and plans to open at least three new clinics in 2007. Still, Saxena thinks that getting connected will be a snap with the new network. "We just need to order a circuit here and a router there, and each new clinic will be connected to our head office right away," he says. In fact, as APM grows, its network will have the flexibility and reliability to provide a wide range of new services and applications. Says Saxena, "We don't have to worry at all about our future expansion."

> Thanks to the new network, APM was able to centralize scheduling and billing in its main office, reducing the need for administrative staff in each office.

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