

Innovative Provider Improves Care and Increases Number of Home-Care Visits

Serving communities throughout Minnesota and Western Wisconsin, Allina Hospitals & Clinics is at the forefront of electronic medical record (EMR) use to deliver seamless, coordinated care. Two of their hospitals are at Stage 6 in the HIMSS Analytics EMR Adoption Model – a level of operational excellence achieved by only four percent of all providers. Allina includes 11 hospitals, four ambulatory care centers, 97 clinics, and a home-care division named one of the top in the country three years in a row. When they faced data communication challenges, the home-care group found the perfect solution with Mobility XE® from NetMotion Wireless.

About the Deployment

More than 300 Allina home care and hospice nurses visit patient homes, carrying a range of laptops, mostly Lenovo devices from the X60 series on up to the X200 series. Some use Lenovo tablets. Sierra Wireless AirCards connect over a mix of cellular networks from Verizon and Sprint in order to cover the entire geographic area. Access to Cerner RoadNotes, a point-of-care on-line documentation system for home care, allows nurses to review patient medical history, update care plans, enter new diagnoses and complete EMR documentation. Nurse practitioners, physicians, care managers and directors also access the system — upwards of 400 users in all. Mobility XE is the key to making the deployment work.

From 90 to Zero in Six Months

The EMR application requires field devices to sync with the central database. Waiting until the end of the shift to sync from an office or home DSL line had become unworkable because of data growth — synchronization sessions were taking as long as a half-hour. The solution was to sync via cellular data networks throughout the day after each patient visit, which had the added benefit of real-time EMR updates for better patient care. But as Clyde Daisley, Systems Engineer, relates, “Our Cisco IPsec clients didn’t work well with high-latency connections and coverage drops. Nurses would try to sync, get kicked off their connection which would corrupt their database, then have to call the helpdesk. The support staff had to fumble through the database to try to repair it. If they couldn’t they would extract a new copy from the central database and replace the corrupt one. It took the better part of a half-day to fix and repair, and the nurses would lose whatever work they had done.”

“One of the cellular tech guys recommended Mobility XE. We did a pilot with the 25 nurses who called in the most tickets; we called them our ‘frequent fliers.’ Before the Mobility XE pilot we were facing 90-plus trouble tickets a month. At the end of six months, we were down to almost nothing.”



ALLINA
Hospitals & Clinics

ORGANIZATION

Allina Homecare

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

OBJECTIVES

- Solve dropped-connection problems
- Improve patient care
- Boost efficiency of home care & hospice group

SOLUTION

- Mobility XE® Mobile VPN
- Lenovo laptops and tablets
- Sprint and Verizon networks
- Sierra Wireless data cards
- Cerner RoadNotes
- Microsoft System Center 2007 and Microsoft Forefront

RESULTS

- Patient visits increased by 3-4 per day
- Helpdesk calls virtually eliminated
- Decrease in employee turnover
- Mobile deployment extended to other workers and divisions

Not Just About Efficiency, But Survival

Before the pilot turned things around, “the mobile computing effort wasn’t working,” explains Daisley. “A lot of the nurses quit in frustration. The turnover rate was crazy. We needed home and hospice for full-circle health care. But for the division to be viable, we had to solve the data communication issues so nurses could focus on patient care. Each nurse was seeing five or six patients a day and we needed to increase it to nine a day. We got there. The turning point was when we installed Mobility XE.”

Maximizing Productivity, Multiple Ways

“We cover a wide area,” declares Daisley. “There’s only one building here in the Twin Cities that the hospice workers report to, and for some of them it would be a two hour drive. They start their day at home and stay in the field as much as possible.” For added flexibility, “We give each user the privilege of accessing Wi-Fi if it’s available, at home or if they’re at a coffee shop. We’re OK with that since they’re running over a secure VPN.”

Mobile technicians in the field are available to assist the workers if needed, and the notifications capability of the Mobility XE Analytics Module helps Daisley and his team to identify and resolve potential problems before they can impact quality of care. “We get email alerts, so I can tell the technician, ‘OK, your user just entered 50 million bad entries for a password and their account is locked out.’”

Catalyst for a Growing Deployment

Mobility XE has not only solved the productivity problem, but has allowed Allina to serve more patients. “We’ve doubled our home care staff and Mobility XE played a huge part because it fixed our biggest problem, which was remote connectivity. And since then, we have expanded this thing quite heavily. Now we have nurse practitioners, managers, directors, and medical doctors using it. As word got out, people signed up for it and now it’s standard for anyone with a slower connection or latency higher than 100 milliseconds – pretty much every laptop user who requests an AirCard. We have affiliates all over the place, and we just stick Mobility XE on a client and tell them, ‘Give us an Internet connection with an open port to 5008.’” Mobility XE is now used by workers at Allina who have the option of working from home, by clinical service workers who maintain equipment, and in the emergency medical response system.



Serving patients faster with Mobility XE

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The Indicator That All Is Well

The Mobility XE icon in the system tray became the indicator that the entire mobile deployment is working properly. “If it’s not on, then you need to talk to someone; that’s the nurses’ rule of thumb,” states Daisley. “Our mobile users say that if the Mobility XE icon is lit, you’re good.”

LEARN MORE

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