

Case Study: Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Since 1893, the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) has been providing home healthcare to patients in New York City. Today, the organization's 3,500 clinicians deliver home healthcare services ranging from pediatric to elder care, psychiatric assessments to AIDS treatment, and short-term interventions to long-term management. VNSNY clinicians visit patients throughout New York City's five boroughs, Westchester County, and Nassau County on Long Island. VNSNY is the largest home healthcare organization in the United States; in a typical year, its clinicians make more than 2.2 million visits to more than 115,000 patients.

About the Deployment

One of the organization's strengths is its drive to develop innovative ways of using technology to improve patient outcomes. VNSNY leads the way when it comes to testing and implementing new methods of delivering patient care, enhancing communications with its physician and hospital partners, and promoting operational efficiency.

Since the mid-1990s, VNSNY has been working to eliminate its clinicians' use of paper forms. Clinicians originally recorded notes by hand during their daily patient rounds and also attempted to fill out forms while attending to patients. To simplify access to patient data, VNSNY deployed tablet PCs to their mobile workforce. This gave the nurses remote access to their main database via dial-up or 802.11 wireless connection at any of their regional offices. Over the years this has been in place, the clinicians have seen productivity enhancements from easier access to patient data. But more recently the IT team noticed spikes in data traffic when clinicians connected to the VNSNY network at the beginning of the workday to download new patient information to their tablets, and at the end of the workday to upload new data from that day's visits. These spikes in data transmissions started to cause a slowdown in access to their servers, which in turn threatened the productivity improvements that VNSNY had realized.

During this same timeframe, cellular data carriers began offering significantly faster transmission speeds across their networks. VNSNY's IT team saw this as way of bridging the gap in data access to their remote workers and began deploying wireless data cards to their clinicians. This allowed greater, more ubiquitous access to information at any time during the day and freed workers from only accessing data via dial-up or from VNSNY's Wi-Fi network.

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— Randy Cleghorne,
Director of IT



Organization

Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Industry

Healthcare

Objectives

- Reduce complexity brought by increased wireless access
- Ensure security of wireless data and protect internal network
- Push anti-virus updates to remote client devices

Solution

- Mobility XE mobile VPN

Results

- Seamless roaming between networks without user intervention
- Data secured with AES encryption and Internet site access controlled to protect against viruses
- Clinician access to information at point of care

NetMotion Wireless
701 N 34th Street, Suite 250
Seattle, WA 98103 USA

TEL 206.691.5555
FAX 206.691.5501

www.netmotionwireless.com

Challenges

Increased access to information created challenges for VNSNY's IT team, "We went from dial-up, to WLAN to now also offering wide area data network access," explains Randy Cleghorne, Director of IT for VNSNY, "but with every new method of data access, we also added more complexity for the clinicians. Our goal has always been to try to streamline the technology and make it easier for the clinicians to focus on their jobs not their devices." In addition to the challenges faced by the clinicians, Randy's team was equally concerned with data security. Accessing data across cellular data networks offered clinicians anytime, anywhere access to patient information, email and other applications, as well as data from public websites across the Internet. This required securing the communication and protecting against viruses accidentally being downloaded onto a clinician's device and passed across the internal network infecting other tablet PCs.

Solution

Cleghorne's goal was two-fold — streamline the switch between different network technologies and ensure that data transmissions were secured. After reviewing three different solutions, their team decided on NetMotion Wireless' Mobility XE mobile VPN. "The options we reviewed," explains Cleghorne, "required a lot more infrastructure in terms of additional software and hardware. Simply, it would require too much work and effort to install. We wanted something that was streamlined and easy to manage so we went with Mobility XE."

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Benefits

"We've seen many advantages with Mobility XE," declares Cleghorne. "Beyond its capabilities to let our clinicians roam across different networks securely, we can also control which websites clinicians access, and we are able to push out anti-virus updates to the remote client devices.

"Our goal was not to manage clinicians, our goal was to provide and facilitate access to information they need to do their jobs. The technology could not get in the way of their ability to deliver service to their patients. Whether they are a nurse, therapist, or intake specialist, they are not technologists. They get minimal device training, therefore the device needs to be background to them." Using Mobility XE, VNSNY's clinicians are now able to focus more of their attention on their patients and not on the technologies they use. In addition, the IT team has found a way to simplify the method for accessing data while ensuring that information is secure.

Initially Mobility XE was installed on over 1,500 tablet PCs used by VNSNY clinicians. As the IT team continued its rollout of remote access, more divisions such as the hospice teams were deployed. Currently 3,500 clinicians use Mobility XE for secure, reliable network connections.

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