NetApp®

Health Choice Network: Transforming Healthcare IT

HCNetwork.org®
Health Choice Network
INNOVATIVE HEALTH TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
Healthcare IT service provider

The Challenge
Raise the standard of care by offering faster, more reliable, and more secure access to critical patient data and services.

The Solution
Deliver consistent performance for critical healthcare applications by hosting cloud services on a NetApp® FAS storage system.

Benefits
- Enhances care quality and access to 800,000+ patients
- Drives 132% growth over four years by providing outstanding performance for critical applications
- Meets or exceeds 99.999% availability SLA with zero unplanned downtime
- Supports new data analytics services
- Saves healthcare organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars a year by enabling efficient IT service delivery

Healthcare, Highly Reliant on IT

Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) play a vital role in U.S. healthcare by addressing needs in underserved areas or populations. They receive enhanced reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, and in return, they provide comprehensive services and maintain an exceptionally high standard of care. FQHCs also must adhere to strict reporting requirements and keep personally identifiable health information secure.

To deliver outstanding care and uphold federal requirements, these health centers must securely document, communicate, and track patient information across a continuum of care among labs, pharmacies, hospitals, assisted living facilities, physicians, and others. As patients move from one facility or caregiver to another, their information must be secure yet available without fail, 24/7.

FQHCs also have an increasing need to collect and manage vast stores of data. This anonymous information, when analytics are applied, can offer invaluable insights to improve chronic disease management, track at-risk patient populations, make faster diagnoses, spot population health trends, and enhance providers' operations overall.

Improving patient outcomes through IT efficiency

Although heavily reliant on information technology (IT), FQHCs and other healthcare organizations excel at serving patients, but typically have more limited technology expertise. That's why 41 health centers in 19 states outsource their IT to Health Choice Network (HCN), a Miami-based nonprofit service provider.

HCN is a leader in integrating health information technology among health centers and safety-net providers serving vulnerable populations. It offers complete CIO services, training, and data management services that ultimately benefit more than 800,000 patients who enjoy faster service, fewer errors, and safer transmission of information.

By establishing partnerships with leading technology vendors, HCN gives healthcare providers access to the systems and tools to reliably capture, manage, access, and analyze patient data for outstanding patient care. HCN also helps healthcare professionals to collaborate inside and outside their organizations by offering consistent, proven environments for electronic health records (EHRs) and fiscal systems.

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Michele Russell
CIO, Health Choice Network

"Because we're experts at large-scale healthcare IT, we can offer a lower total cost of ownership and higher service levels than many care providers could achieve on their own," says Michele Russell, CIO at HCN. "And, as a non-profit, our revenue gets reinvested back into infrastructure and human resources, so our services can expand and grow to continually meet the needs of the providers."

The Challenge
Strong growth and new services strain legacy systems

As HCN added members and prepared to offer new cloud services such as analytics, it faced performance bottle-necks in its infrastructure. Care providers began to notice latency in response times for critical applications, including Microsoft Outlook e-mail; Greenway Intergy Practice Management, MediaDent, and EHR; Henry Schein Dentrix oral health records; Sage 300 ERP; and Askesis PsychConsult behavioral health system.

Says Russell, "We have a deep commitment to making sure that physicians can get to the data quickly and easily. If their productivity is held up by slow systems, that means we're not doing our job."

Data growth was also an issue, driven in part by member demand for data analytics services to identify care gaps and make better, faster diagnoses. "Scalability is significant to us because our data is growing on average over 12 terabytes a year," says Russell.

The Solution
High-performance infrastructure speeds service delivery

HCN needed a storage platform that would not only address its latency challenges and offer faster access to a wider range of data and services, but also position the organization for future growth. After extensive evaluations, it turned to NetApp for its cutting edge technology and ability to integrate with other key technology providers. Says Russell, "Technologies such as NetApp deduplication and flexible volumes as well as tight integration with VMware help us make the most of our budget and get more from our storage. For our healthcare customers, this translates to quick, reliable, and efficient access to the vital information they need."

For performance and flexibility, NetApp recommended HCN deploy a NetApp FAS storage system running the Data ONTAP® operating system. VMware vSphere virtual machines and Citrix XenApp servers use the NFS protocol, while Windows file shares are served using direct CIFS. Having highly available storage with fast I/O makes technology more effective for healthcare providers, giving doctors rapid access to information when meeting with patients.

Customer service was a major factor in choosing NetApp. Says Russell, "We have a true partnership with NetApp that extends far beyond the technology. NetApp understands healthcare IT and understands what we need."

Business Benefits
Faster performance means better care

Now that HCN has moved virtual machines and data to the new NetApp array, latency is no longer an issue. Physicians and clinicians simply point, click, and quickly get the required data, minimizing delays and optimizing the quality of patient care.

"With NetApp as the basis of our healthcare IT services, we don't worry about performance issues," says Russell. "That frees us up to concentrate on finding new ways to create value for our members and achieve our number-one goal: improving care quality and access for the more than 800,000 people served by our member healthcare organizations."

Since the migration to the NetApp solution, HCN has not experienced any unplanned downtime. "We're meeting or exceeding the 99.98% availability SLA we promise to our members, and we wouldn't be able to do that without NetApp," says Russell.

Making data work smarter

HCN now has the capacity, scalability, and performance it needs to make data

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analytics services available to more customers, including 94 public schools in Miami-Dade County that use anonymous student information to track student health and determine how it relates to attendance and academic achievement.

Redirecting funds back into healthcare

The ability to offer outstanding performance and availability along with new services is making HCN more competitive, driving 132% growth over four years. It's also improving care systems in the states where HCN operates and saving care providers hundreds of thousands of dollars a year by enabling efficient service delivery. Those funds can now be invested directly into healthcare, rather than IT systems and operating expenses.

"We still see a lot of healthcare organizations struggling with IT," says Russell. "With NetApp, we can help more of them, and at a significantly lower cost than our competitors."

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

NetApp Products
NetApp FAS storage system

NetApp Data ONTAP

NetApp deduplication

Environment
Applications: Microsoft Exchange Server; Greenway Intergy Practice Management, MediaDent, and EHR; Henry Schein Dentrix Enterprise; Askesis PsychConsult; Sage 300 ERP

Database: Microsoft SQL Server

Server platform: HP

Network: Cisco

Server virtualization: VMware vSphere

Application virtualization: Citrix XenApp

Protocols
NFS

CIFS

Fibre Channel

NetApp®

Leading organizations worldwide count on NetApp for software, systems and services to manage and store their data. Customers value our teamwork, expertise and passion for helping them succeed now and into the future.

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