

INTERCOASTAL MEDICAL GROUP

HP thin clients ease electronic health records automation



“Historically, physician practices have not invested heavily in IT. Today it’s a necessity. HP thin clients provide a secure, easy-to-manage platform for improved patient care and reduced paper-based errors.”

—Geoffrey Simon, chief administrative officer, Intercoastal Medical Group, Sarasota, Fla.

HP customer case study: Intercoastal Medical Group electronic health records and practice management relies on HP thin clients

Industry: Health care

Objective:

Improve patient care and reduce paper-based error potential with electronic health records and practice management system

Approach:

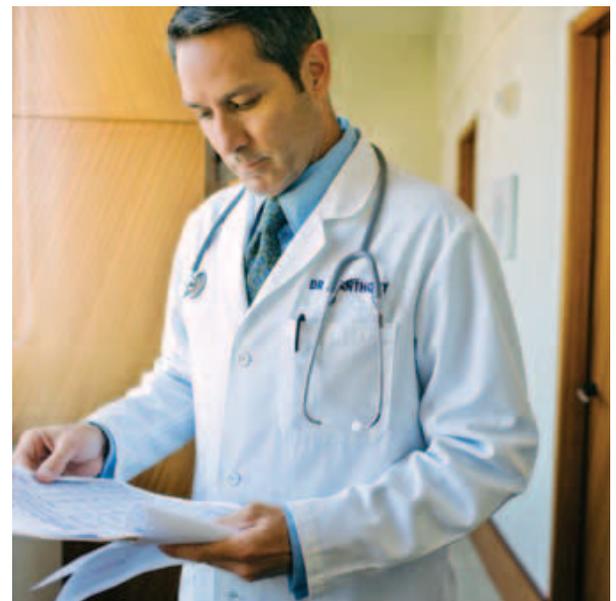
Deploy HP thin client platform

IT improvements:

- Automate slow, cumbersome, error-prone manual paper processes
- Image devices quickly
- Deploy upgrades efficiently
- Enhanced security with no local hard drive

Business benefits:

- Improve patient care and reduce potential for charting errors, delays
- Improve efficiency by re-assigning staff previously devoted to manual processes to higher-value responsibilities
- Help ensure accurate, timely recording, availability and transfer of patient information



Florida’s Intercoastal Medical Group (IMG) counts 255,000 patient encounters a year, 85,000 lab tests and 80,000 imaging studies. A simple misfiled test could result in delayed treatment and a poorer outcome. That is why IMG is implementing an electronic health records (EHR) and practice management system with HP thin clients. Doctors and nurses like the new system because they can log on in any exam room or nurses’ station for up-to-date, easily accessed patient information. The medical group’s technology staff appreciates that HP thin clients are cost efficient, and simplify device deployment and management. IMG administration recognizes that the solution’s efficiency translates into reducing the likelihood of paper and filing errors, and better patient care.

"The sheer volume of transactions we track creates a lot of openings for human error," says IMG Chief Administrative Officer Geoffrey Simon. "HP thin clients and EHR software advance our ability to detect and address patient problems in a timely fashion."

Medical group envisions a better way

IMG is a professional association of 65 physicians in six locations in Florida's Sarasota and Manatee counties. The traditional manual processes for patient record-keeping were slow, cumbersome and prone to error. Every lab test, for example, had to be filed by hand into a patient's chart. Recognizing electronic document management as the wave of the future, IMG administrators turned to Sage Intergy EHR and practice management software. It adopted a Citrix Access Gateway—set up with the assistance of HP Authorized Business Partner Bayshore Technologies—and searched for a complementary solution platform. The association's physicians had requested a monitor in each exam room, and envisioned a system of PCs each running three network monitors. However, IMG executives spoke with a number of industry peers and learned that those who'd adopted such PC systems were dissatisfied with their choice. A thin client solution, they reasoned, offered significant cost, manageability and security advantages. After considering a variety of vendor offerings, IMG chose HP for its robust portfolio and because HP thin clients come embedded with Altiris Client Management Suite software.

"HP has gained the competitive edge as far as I am concerned," says IMG IT Systems and Support Manager Mike Soler. "Also, the HP solution is packaged with Altiris, which is a powerful tool to roll out images and manage devices remotely."

The medical group acquired some 200 HP Compaq t5730 Thin Clients with Microsoft® Windows® XP Embedded. These are deployed in exam rooms and check-in stations. In addition, HP t5540 Thin Clients with Windows Embedded CE are deployed at nurses' stations and in the front office. IMG also uses HP printers, and each doctor's office is equipped with an HP Compaq dc5800 PC.

The HP Compaq t5730 Thin Client with Windows XPe represents a new class of thin client with a powerful AMD processor, high-end graphics, slim design, expanded peripheral support, HP Sygate Security



Agent and optional integrated wireless. IMG chose XP Embedded because it supports touchscreen capabilities and biometric security. The medical practitioners especially appreciate how little space the devices require, bracket-mounted to their own monitors on physicians' desks or mounted on exam-room walls. The HP t5540 Thin Clients at the nurses' stations are equipped with Windows CE 6.0, providing a familiar operating system and enhanced security with locked-down user settings. In a typical day, a nurse will arrive at work, log on to his or her Citrix-hosted desktop and review schedules. The nurse then might log on to an HP Compaq t5730 Thin Client in an exam room, calling up the incoming patient's medication lists and known allergies to be immediately available for the doctor.

"HP thin clients are easy to deploy, easy to manage, secure and reliable. They are also very aesthetically pleasing and offer many accessories to aid in their installation."

Mike Soler, IT systems and support manager,
Intercoastal Medical Group

IMG is deploying its electronic solution in stages. It started with access through the Citrix gateway to patient medication and allergy data. Next it added lab test orders and results. Soon doctors' notes will be included. Physicians ultimately will have full access to patient records reducing the chance of information gaps as patients move back and forth among primary

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“The sheer volume of transactions we track creates a lot of openings for human error. HP thin clients and EHR software help us detect and address patient problems without delay.”

Geoffrey Simon, chief administrative officer,
Intercoastal Medical Group

care doctors and specialists. To save practitioners from having to log on and off multiple times throughout the day, IMG plans to deploy biometric security.

Eventually, the system will extend to all aspects of the organization, including business administration. The medical group chose the Sage Intergy Practice Portal to allow patients secure access to information, forms, appointment requests and prescription renewal requests. A Sage business intelligence tool is to monitor financial and clinical data. A business management application will enable IMG to automate and streamline core accounting, payroll, financial reporting and project management. The automation achieved so far has enabled the medical group’s radiology practice to reduce six full-time equivalents devoted to scheduling, handing reports and manually tracking information. The employment numbers might not change, Simon says, but staff can be deployed more efficiently.

“Traditionally, physician practices have not invested heavily in IT, so this represents a significant commitment,” Simon comments. “Ultimately when you consider the efficiency gains and the benefits of timely treatment, the hope is it will translate into cost savings. The key reasons, however, are reducing the potential for error and better patient care. Someone in my own family once suffered when a test result was not properly followed up. I don’t want that to happen to somebody else’s mom.”

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The ease of going thin

Considering the scope and ambition of IMG’s automation project, Soler is delighted by his organization’s choice of HP thin clients. The devices, he says, are easy to deploy, simple to manage, less costly, more secure and energy efficient.

Thin clients are solid-state access devices that connect via network to a server. Having no hard drive, they are inherently more secure than other platforms; most of the network data storage and processing occur on the server. With no fan or other moving parts, thin clients have a long lifespan and use little power. Maintenance costs are low because software application updates, virus scanning and patches are executed at the server. Deployment costs are also low; thin clients can be remotely configured and need not be set up individually. Break-fix simply requires replacing the device.

“With HP thin clients we’re able to log in remotely, with no drive time or expense,” Soler says. “And it’s simple to roll out HP thin clients. Imaging them takes about 10 minutes or less, compared to several hours loading applications on a PC. Upgrades are fast and easy. We have 10 Citrix servers hosting our

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Electronic health records and practice management

Primary hardware

- HP Compaq t5730 Thin Client
- HP t5540 Thin Client
- HP Compaq dc5800 Business Desktop PC

Primary software

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Embedded
- Windows® Embedded CE 6.0
- Altiris Client Management Suite

applications; rolling out upgrades to 300-plus fat clients would take days, compared to a few hours for thin clients. Deploying HP thin clients has also given us a significant reduction in our client-level security concerns.”

“Upgrades are fast and easy. Rolling out upgrades to 300-plus fat clients would take days, compared to a few hours for thin clients.”

Mike Soler, IT systems and support manager,
Intercoastal Medical Group

Altiris has been an invaluable tool, Soler adds, for managing both the HP thin clients and the HP Compaq dc5800 Business Desktop PCs.

Simon notes that IMG’s automation with HP thin clients has transformed what the health care industry tends to view as a daunting necessity into a solid path to a stronger system. “The goal is to provide better quality service so that people need fewer health care system resources, and live long and healthy lives.”

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