

Putting Vital Information in Physicians' Hands

St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services Provides Physician Access to Patient Data Quickly and Securely Via PDA

Enterprise: St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services

Industry: Healthcare

Application: Using Clarinet Systems' EthIR LAN™ wireless connectivity device, physicians can access the organization's network via the built-in infrared (IR) ports on their handheld computers and PDAs. The secure wireless connection, versatile interface and lack of need to additional software created an ideal low-cost solution. Physicians enrolled in the mobile program at St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services can access general hospital census, individual physician census, group physician census, transcripts, test results and notes from their handhelds.

Profile: St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services include eight hospitals in Indiana. St. Vincent is a founding member of the Central Indiana Health System, a values-based alliance of local health care providers.

Physicians rely on patient data and vital information that can be accessed efficiently, in a timely manner, to provide the best possible patient care. The ability to access this information securely and conveniently from any location within the hospital is paramount. The challenge for St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services of Indiana was to develop a secure, low-cost solution that would allow patient computing on multiple portable device types throughout the hospital.

Using a handheld PDA has become increasingly popular among busy physicians, however Federal legislation requires that physicians, nurses, executives, human resources personnel and other specific healthcare workgroups have secure wireless access to the hospitals' networks in order to ensure patient confidentiality and prevent malicious access to information. Most wireless connectivity solutions use radio-frequency (RF) and can be compromised in short order however, infrared (IR) technology provides secure network access for handhelds that is virtually impenetrable.

St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services is taking advantage of the functionality handhelds offer by integrating the use of PDAs into their patient-computing model. Clarinet Systems was chosen to provide the secure synchronization hardware to enable unimpeded and instant network connectivity for St. Vincent's staff physicians. Using Clarinet Systems' EthIR LAN™ wireless connectivity device, physicians access the hospital's network via the built-in infrared (IR) ports on their handheld computers. Since Clarinet Systems uses infrared technology, patient information is secure and cannot be compromised. The IR ports are conveniently located throughout the hospital where physicians have fast and easy access to patient records, test results, schedules, reference materials and other critical information which, ultimately, saves time and improves overall patient care.

Prior to implementing the new program, St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services was restricted to using Palm devices with their cradles at specific desktop locations within the organization, which limited a physician's ability to quickly access information. The inefficiency created an increasing need for mobile devices to access the hospitals' more extensive software applications from a variety of locations. Clarinet Systems' EthIR LAN provided the secure wireless connection, versatile interface and low cost solution needed for a successful implementation.

"We needed portable device access that wouldn't limit us to one device or cradle. The IR ports provide a connection to the LAN that was consistent with conventional networking. With Clarinet Systems, we could use a Palm device, we could use a CE device and we could use a Windows device. The IR ports did not require a specific interface, software setup, cradle, hardware or even a PC Card. The easy setup and configuration had us connected to our network in no time," said Jeffery Bowman, M.D., M.S. "Our project has increased satisfaction and has addressed the needs of the physicians by providing quick and efficient access to vital information. Increasing the time available physicians have to actually see patients rather than tracking down data puts us on the right track."