

Community Healthcare System Selects AirWave Wireless to Control its Cisco Wi-Fi Network

For Community Healthcare System in Indiana, the decision to install a Wi-Fi network was easy: wireless offered a less expensive, faster, and more appropriate way to deliver connectivity to doctors, nurses, and administrative staff. With a secure, reliable wireless network, the staff would have better access to information and, most important, be able to deliver better care to their patients. For CIO Vernon Groeber, Technology Director Nur Rajwany and Network Engineer Doug Szarmach, the question was not **whether** to deploy Wi-Fi but **how** to manage a secure and reliable wireless network.



CHS first installed a wireless network years ago, to allow nurses at St. Catherine and St. Mary to use “computers on wheels” for charting and other bedside applications. However, Technology Director Nur Rajwany knew that CHS needed a long-term strategy to design, secure and manage a rapidly growing wireless LAN. “Our goal is to deliver better patient care in the most efficient way possible,” says Rajwany. “Every leading healthcare organization today is starting to computerize patient charting, disposition, order-entry, and other processes to

improve accuracy and reduce costs. These work-flow processes require mobility for physicians and nurses. This means wireless coverage eventually needs to be “everywhere.” At CHS, even infusion pumps and other commonly-used medical equipment at CHS would eventually be WiFi-enabled, making the wireless LAN a true mission-critical component of CHS’ overall network infrastructure.

Security

For CIO Vernon Groeber, the number one wireless concern was security. “We need to be able to tell our customers and our corporate compliance team how we’re protecting confidential patient data,” he said. “Before proceeding, we needed to make sure we would not be hacked via the wireless network.”

CHS selected the HP ProCurve Networking 700wl series of WLAN gateways to provide access control and authentication for a wide variety of devices with diverse operating systems: computers, PDAs, medical equipment, and possibly even VOIP phones. Having addressed access control, CHS’s technical team selected the AirWave Management Platform wireless management software as the other core component of their wireless security solution:

- *Centralized Configuration Policy Enforcement & Audit* – AMP automatically applies CHS’s security policies across the entire Wi-Fi infrastructure in all locations and regularly audits all the devices to ensure that those policies remain in effect.
- *Rogue Access Point Detection* – With three large, geographically dispersed hospitals, conducting manual scans for unauthorized ‘rogue’ access points would be prohibitively time-consuming. AirWave’s RAPIDS rogue detection software uses a combination of wired and wireless scanning techniques to automatically detect and report any unauthorized devices to the CHS staff.

OVERVIEW

Community Healthcare System (www.comhs.org) is the leading healthcare provider in Northwestern Indiana, operating three large, not-for-profit hospitals: Community Hospital in Munster, St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago and St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart. Together, the three operate the region’s largest cardiovascular and cancer treatment programs.

REQUIREMENTS

- **Security** to protect sensitive patient data and ensure compliance with internal and HIPAA requirements
- **Centralized control** over the wireless LAN across multiple facilities and locations, some without onsite IT staff
- **Ease of Use** for the Help Desk Support staff as well as network engineers.

SOLUTION

- **AirWave Management Platform™ Professional Edition** wireless network management software
- **RAPIDS** rogue access point detection software module
- **HP ProCurve 700wl** wireless gateway.
- **Cisco Aironet 350 and 100** wireless access points.

Centralized Control

With a Wi-Fi network that would grow swiftly from eighty to several hundred wireless access points competing with several other critical projects for his attention, Rajwany and Szarmach knew CHS needed a centralized management solution that would both automate routine tasks and allow a small IT staff to control a large, geographically dispersed wireless network with hundreds of Cisco Aironet access points.

“We obviously cannot afford to add another 10 FTEs to our staff. The AirWave Management Platform gave us a way to help one person do the work of ten,” said Rajwany. “We really just want to plug in the wireless access point and have everything work,” he added. AMP provides CHS staff a single console where they can define configuration policies centrally and even automatically distribute firmware updates to all their access points after hours, when network usage is low. CHS’ IT staff use AMP’s real-time views to see exactly who is connected to the WLAN and to monitor their signal quality, bandwidth utilization, location and other critical information.

Ease of Use

For CHS, ease of use was another critical factor that led them to select the AirWave Management Platform over competitive solutions. The core members of CHS’ networking group are skilled professionals who set network policies, plan for growth, and control the network configuration. Yet, CHS’ Desktop Support specialists in each of the hospitals are critical members of the team and are essential to delivering quality user support. They too need real-time information about WLAN performance to troubleshoot end-user problems. AMP’s intuitive web-based user interface gives these staff members read-only monitoring access to the data they require while ensuring that only authorized networking specialists make configuration changes to the network. “AMP is a very well-designed and easy to use tool, so we’re able to delegate routine monitoring tasks to Desktop Support, freeing up the Networking staff for other projects,” said Rajwany.

RESULTS

CHS’ wireless installation has been a clear success for the IT department, which plans to expand the network from medical areas to administrative areas, offsite clinics and wellness centers, and some public areas. Even better, with the AirWave Management Platform, the wireless network has not been a burden on the IT staff, which has been able to focus its time and energy on other projects, like the installation of a new healthcare information system that will enable even more wireless applications. “AirWave has been a lifesaver,” concluded Szarmach.

“The AirWave Management Platform software was not the most inexpensive solution we looked at, but it was clearly the best value... It gave us a way to help one person do the work of ten.”

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