An Ounce of Prevention Improves Patient Care and the Bottom Line

"We love the fact that they are out-of-the-box, ready-to-go. We are deciding whether to replace dumb terminals with new Wyse devices or redeploy older PCs. My gut tells me to buy new hardware from Wyse. We just plug them in and they are done. They automatically pull the firmware upgrade down. The speed is great."

Stephen Hart

Systems and Network Administrator

Dreyer Medical Clinic

Dreyer Medical Clinic, Aurora, Illinois

With health care costs escalating, and seeming impossible to control, Dreyer Medical Clinic trimmed overhead and improved patient care. In 2000, they started transitioning to a paperless medical record system and deployed low-cost Wyse® Winterm™ thin clients in exam rooms for easy access to the data. "We have 12 service locations," said Cheryl Hart, Electronic Medical Records Project Manager. "The clinic has spent millions of dollars moving paper charts from site to site."

Dreyer is a multi-specialty group practice with more than 125 physicians and a wide range of health professionals. They operate 12 service locations in the Fox Valley region west of Chicago, Illinois. Until recently, every patient had a paper chart that had to be transported from the medical records department to the exam room and back with notations added for every visit. Doctors ended each day dictating hours of notes for transcription. If a patient needed urgent care, the record was not immediately available.

Going Paperless

The transition to a paperless medical practice began with a new browser-based information system. Dreyer selected EpicCare® integrated software to manage the data, and created a server-centric computing system so all of the applications and data could be managed in one central location. To connect to the centralized servers, Dreyer needed a device to display Windows® and web applications in a manner that was as reliable as an old mainframe text terminal. The small size and configuration of the exam rooms called for a desktop device with a small footprint that was reliable and secure. No one wanted a bulky monitor or a desk between the physician and patient, or to lose access to a record during an exam.

WYSE

Solution Architecture

- Clients:
  - 500 Wyse® Winterm™ 1200LE
- Servers:
  - 7 servers running Citrix® MetaFrame® and XPE on Windows® 2000
- Applications:
  - EpicCare®
  - EpicWeb® terminal emulation
  - Microsoft® Office Suite
- Network
  - 12 remote locations

A Better Solution: Wyse Winterm Terminals

Dreyer Medical replaced green-screen terminals with Wyse Winterm terminals in nurses' stations and also deployed the Winterm thin clients in exam rooms for instant access to up-to-date patient medical records. A perfect prescription for health care environments, they are silent and durable with low emissions and low electrical power requirements. Thin clients have proven to be more robust than handheld computers, and require less maintenance than a PC.

"The small form factor keeps the exam rooms clean," said Stephen Hart, Systems and Network Administrator. "The doctor or nurse can easily access information without losing eye contact with the patient."

At the beginning of an exam, the nurse brings up the patient's record and enters vital signs. Doctors enter notes using hot buttons and smart phrases during the exam rather than at the end of the day, and they can even fax a prescription to the patient's pharmacy from the terminal. Each device has an identification number connected to the exam room to improve scheduling and manage the flow of patients.

Healthy System, Better Care

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Dreyer has a central server system located at company headquarters in Aurora. The IT staff makes all of the adjustments, upgrades, and performs maintenance on the servers. With DHCP properly configured, the Wyse Windows terminals plug in to the network for access to applications, data, and configuration updates. Because the devices have no moving parts or media drives, they do not break down and viruses cannot be introduced.

When the U.S. Congress passed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in 1996, every facility providing medical treatment had to meet new privacy and security requirements for patient records. With the centralized, paperless medical record system, Dreyer easily implemented the security protocols to meet federal standards. In addition to setting access restrictions on EpicCare, they strategically placed monitors to prevent visual access.

Since they are running a paperless office, reliable access to the server and up-to-date applications are mission-critical to operations. When Dreyer upgraded the EpicCare software on the servers, all of the Winterm terminal users were instantly up and running the latest version. Meanwhile, PCs in doctors' offices required software updates or hands-on troubleshooting.

Knowledge Management

Dreyer has effectively reduced costs while improving patient care with 24/7 access to patient records. The medical records department is reducing transportation and transcription service costs and delays as electronic access is rolled out to each department. Doctors can leave the office earlier without end-of-the-day dictation. When a patient is treated, the record is guaranteed to be up-to-date. And if an unscheduled patient requires urgent care, nurses and doctors on staff have the information they need to provide the best treatment.

"Everything is at a doctor's fingertips," said Cheryl Hart about the benefit of Winterm terminals. "They know what medications a patient is on and see all the notes. The benefit to the patient is better care."

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