Large Catholic Health Care Provider Finds Cure to Efficient System Security at Quest

Established in 1986, Sisters of Mercy Health System is the 9th largest Catholic healthcare system in the U.S. based on net patient service revenue. Mercy operates 19 acute care hospitals, two heart hospitals, outpatient care facilities, physician practices, skilled nursing and long-term residential care facilities, clinics, and a managed care subsidiary throughout a seven-state area encompassing Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Services are provided by approximately 31,000 co-workers and 4,600 physicians.

Mercy called on Quest to help improve the availability and security of its online medical record systems.

The Challenge

Computers have been used in healthcare for many years to improve efficiency and service. And regardless of the variety of computer systems used in the this industry, they all have one thing in common, according to Jeff Bell, Mercy's CTO: "All of them spit out a piece of paper at the end of the workflow that ends up being the legal, medical record."

To better serve its patients, Mercy decided to move from paper-based medical records to the online equivalent. This provides patient records in a centralized database that can be accessed by healthcare providers, health plan administrators, and patients themselves. For example, the hospital staff can access information about a patient's chronic health conditions and prior surgeries before making care choices, and alerts would notify doctors of drug allergies or possible interactions with the patient's other drugs.

Mercy recognized that the online system would require continuous availability and security for the patient data. "The IT systems, from the mainframes to PCs on the nursing floor, must be up and running all the time," explained Bell.

To provide quick access to critical patient information, Mercy needed to grant the appropriate staff access to sensitive systems and data, including Active Directory. Unfortunately, native Active Directory tools were becoming inadequate for controlling, monitoring and auditing access, making it difficult for Mercy to ensure security and demonstrate compliance with regulations such as HIPAA. For this reason Mercy began to search for a solution that would enable monitoring and granular auditing for critical systems to ensure they could maintain integrity and control of user access and ensure availability.

The Quest Solution

Mercy's IT staffers performed a thorough evaluation of a number of auditing solutions on the market. They found that Quest's InTrust and InTrust Plug-in for Active Directory best met the organization's needs. InTrust monitors access to critical systems, in this case Windows and Active Directory, and generates real-time alerts for all inappropriate or suspicious events. InTrust Plug-in for Active Directory tracks, stores -- as well as alerts and reports on -- domain controller activity and the details of changes made to Active Directory and Group Policy.

The Bottom Line

Because InTrust tracks how access rights are being used, Mercy is able to confidently grant appropriate access to systems and data to service desk staff, which has led to quicker problem resolution and increased user satisfaction. "We have achieved better turnaround times on the service desk while at the same time maintaining the proper integrity and the controls on our Active Directory environment," said Bell.

"We have two people who monitor and maintain Active Directory. I've talked to peers in organizations about the same size who have teams of four or five that do the same set of functions. InTrust helps us to operate with a leaner staff."

– Jeff Bell
  CTO
  Sisters of Mercy Health System

Overview

MERCY
SISTERS OF MERCY
HEALTH SYSTEM

Headquarters

St. Louis, Missouri

Services

Health care services

Critical Needs

To control system access and improve auditing and compliance

Solution

Quest® InTrust and InTrust Plug-in for Active Directory

Results

• Improved system security and availability for over 65,000 Active Directory and Windows users

• Improved compliance with regulations and simplified auditing

• Reduced IT work load significantly

QUEST SOFTWARE®

InTrust ensures that access privileges are not abused. "InTrust gives us the confidence to grant access safely," said Bell. "We can let service desk technicians know what they are and aren't allowed to do, and we have the proper controls to make sure that our administrative policies are followed."

InTrust's auditing and reporting features have also improved Mercy's ability to demonstrate compliance with regulations. "In our last yearly financial audit with Ernst & Young, InTrust helped us validate that we were 100% in compliance," said Bell.

InTrust also facilitates HIPAA compliance by ensuring that no one can bypass Mercy's account provisioning process. "With InTrust, it's well-documented and auditable that the proper co-workers have fully approved access to any system," explained Bell. "And if someone has been granted access to a piece of software or an application directly through Active Directory, bells and whistles go off."

InTrust has increased both the security and availability of Mercy's systems while yielding labor savings. "We have two people who monitor and maintain Active Directory," reported Bell. "I've talked to peers in organizations about the same size who have teams of four or five that do the same set of functions. InTrust helps us to operate with a leaner staff. "

About Sisters of Mercy Health System

The Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) operates hospitals, physician practices, outpatient clinics, health plans and related health and human services in a seven state area including Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Its members include 19 acute care hospitals providing more than 4,000 licensed beds, two heart hospitals, a managed care subsidiary (Mercy Health Plans), physician practices, outpatient care facilities, home health programs, skilled nursing services and long-term care facilities. Services are provided by approximately 31,000 co-workers and 4,600 physicians who are employed or practice at Mercy facilities. Mercy is the 9th largest Catholic healthcare system in the U.S. based on net patient service revenue. It is sponsored by Mercy Health Ministry, an entity established by the Catholic Church to oversee the healing ministry and Catholic identity of Mercy. For more information, visit **www.mercy.net**.

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc., a leading enterprise systems management vendor, delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases, Windows infrastructure and virtual environments. Quest also provides customers with client management through its ScriptLogic subsidiary and server virtualization management through its Vizioncore subsidiary. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 100,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest helps organizations deliver, manage and control complex database environments through award-winning products for Oracle, SQL Server, IBM DB2, Sybase and MySQL. Visit **www.quest.com** for more information.