



Providence Health System

Providence Health System is the fourth most integrated healthcare system in the country and a pioneer in the concept of internal “Centers of Excellence”. Now, the not-for-profit hospital network relies on BlueSecure™ Controllers from Bluesocket® to get patients involved in the medical decision process.

With more than 14,000 employees and more than 90 percent of its doctors in private practice, Providence Health System of Oregon has the unique challenge of using wireless as a two-way information pathway between patients and healthcare providers. The Bluesocket® network at the center eases the stress of hospital stays by offering a secure link to the Internet and world beyond the hospital's walls.



www.providence.org

BLUESOCKET DEPLOYMENT AT PROVIDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM

- Providence Health System presently has BlueSecure 5000 Controllers installed in two hospitals in Oregon, and five BlueSecure 2100 Controllers at a third Oregon hospital and facilities in Washington State and Alaska. All of the Controllers connect with Cisco 1200 access points (APs), which are also used by the hospital's private Cisco wireless network.
- User authentication on the Bluesocket public access WiFi network is kept to a minimum (email login) to provide a swift and effortless entry to the Internet.
- While doctors and nurses now use the private WiFi network to access and enter medical information, eventually they may also use the public network and a secure VPN to tunnel back to hospital resources and communicate directly with patients.
- Although Internet usage is not tracked on the public WiFi network, questionable Websites are blocked to prevent offending hospital patients or visitors.
- The hospital presently uses Vocera Communications Voice over IP (VoIP) badges that allow doctors and nurses to communicate over the hospital's private WiFi system.

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Getting patients more involved in their healthcare is the goal of most hospitals and medical facilities in the United States. This makes perfect sense as approaches to healthcare become more complex and personalized.

Providence Health System is taking it a step further than just providing a faster and more direct route to billing and administrative information. The hospital group has installed wireless networks in seven of its hospitals that provide patients with quick and easy access to their administrative records and some general medical information. These networks also offer a wireless link to the Internet and personal email, and will eventually be expanded to provide access to personal medical data and communications through their PCs with doctors and nurses.

“We want to put the public in touch with their information in the same way the medical staff is in touch with their information,” says Dick Gibson, MD PhD, Chief Medical Information Officer for Providence Health System, a network of hospitals, clinics, health plans, and mostly private-practice physicians based in Portland, OR. “The idea is to have more people involved in healthcare decision-making.”

The Challenge for Providence Health System

Providence Health System launched this ambitious plan several years ago by installing a non-public Cisco wireless network that allowed healthcare professionals working in the hospitals access to patient information, as well as extend medical information resources directly to each patient's bedside. Early last year, the hospital group added a Bluesocket, Inc. wireless network, which sits on top of the existing Cisco private WiFi system to provide public wireless access to the Internet for patients, visitors, and suppliers.

Two hospitals in Oregon are presently using BlueSecure 5000 Controllers and five facilities in Oregon, Washington and Alaska have BlueSecure 2100 Controllers as the hubs of their public wireless networks. All of the Controllers provide real-time monitoring to protect the networks from viruses, and can easily manage user access, provide critical bandwidth control, and maintain an uncompromising security shield.

The systems have performed so well that Providence officials plan to deploy BlueSecure controllers at three more hospitals in Oregon over the next six months.



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Dick Gibson MD PhD
Chief Medical Information Officer
Providence Health System

Secure Mobility® Solutions



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While most of the doctors who operate from Providence Health System now use the private internal WiFi network and hospital PCs to access and share medical information with each other, down the road they may also make use of the public WiFi system to access sensitive medical information through a virtual private network (VPN), says Gibson. This is challenging since more than 90 percent of the doctors who work out of Providence Health System are private-practice physicians.

The Bluesocket Solution

Ease of deployment and bandwidth control were the two most important reasons why Providence Health System selected Bluesocket for its public WiFi system, since the system shares the same Cisco 1200 access points as the private wireless network. It was critical that the public WiFi network not interfere with the private network, or that its operation in any way impact the performance of the private network, notes Gibson.

“The Bluesocket system frees us to worry just about the information management instead of the infrastructure. In healthcare, it’s all about the details, and by having the wireless and connections part taken care of we can now turn all of our attention to managing the content,” he said.

Managing the medical information content is only one part of an evolving strategy at Providence Health System that will eventually provide an interactive conduit between patients and healthcare resources. The hospital group plans to use wireless technology to open doors that are normally closed, or at least difficult to jar open for patients. This includes using public WiFi and the Internet to provide access to billing, the cost of procedures, electronic records and even laboratory test results.

Patients and visitors who use the public WiFi system are first directed by the BlueSecure Controller to a log-in page where they can enter their email address. By entering their email address, a visitor agrees not to misuse the system and to comply with any internal policy management rules. The system allows virtually unlimited access to the Internet, although the hospital does block sites that may be inappropriate or offensive to others, says Gibson.

The hospital does not track where a visitor goes when using the public wireless network, although the BlueSecure Controller is certainly capable of doing this and generating detailed reports. “We want to channel people in the right direction, as well as eliminate the possibility of any embarrassing images on the screen as people walk by a user,” Gibson points out.

Gibson views wireless access as a crucial element in this “completely transparent health strategy” that will eventually let patients “see through the walls and all the inner workings” of the hospital group.

“We believe in the future that patients will have even more responsibility for helping their providers make the best decisions with them,” he explains. “Bluesocket means they can do that while they are in the hospital and while they are on our campus.”