The Grass isn’t Always Greener: Why One Critical Access Hospital Returned to Healthland

SUCCESS STORY
Introduction

For rural hospitals, changes in government regulations, reimbursement models, and payment reform have become the new normal. Healthcare providers are now looking to technology more than ever to help address these changes while, at the same time, work to increase productivity, lower costs, and improve patient care. As a result, health information technology (HIT) organizations must focus on partnering with these healthcare facilities that play such an important role in delivering quality care to rural communities. For electronic health records (EHR) providers, offering products and services are no longer enough. Today, technology partners must deliver results that help hospitals: improve operations; maximize IT investment; simplify implementation; and increase user adoption. Most importantly, they must share an ongoing commitment to provide quality healthcare to these small communities of family, friends, and neighbors.

Community wellness has gained visibility and importance over the past few years and is critical to rural communities. In fact, improving community health has become a key initiative at the government level. According to the Institute of Medicine, the major causes of disease and death among Americans have changed over the last century, shifting from predominantly communicable diseases spread by germs to chronic ailments — ailments and diseases that could be prevented. A recent article from Government Health IT states that chronic diseases are responsible for 75 percent of healthcare costs in the United States. For rural areas with limited resources and a high population of aging residents, it is imperative to have the technology available to combat chronic illness, lower healthcare costs, and improve the health and vitality of these small communities.

For Kentucky-based New Horizons Health Systems, Inc. they knew they needed an EHR solution to help them care for their community and meet new government requirements. “We were a former Healthland customer but left for a variety of reasons many years ago,” said Bernie Poe, New Horizons Health Systems, Inc. CEO. “But when ARRA was passed, we knew our current solution wouldn’t get us where we needed to be. We looked at virtually all the healthcare IT providers out there and none of them had the three things we were looking for: a fully integrated platform, rural focus, and the long-term partnership that we wanted. That’s when we considered Healthland again and when we did, we liked what we saw. They looked different than they had some years ago. Today, the technology, customer care and support with Healthland are exactly what we need in an HIT partner. Healthland listens and understands the unique needs and challenges in the rural healthcare environment.”

New Horizons Health Systems’ experience is not unique. The search for an HIT provider in the rural healthcare market can be difficult in a sea of solutions that are often times designed for large urban hospitals. Team members at Healthland say it’s something they hear every day and is exactly why they created Healthland Centriq. Today, the organization is experiencing an influx of hospitals choosing Centriq specifically for its rural focus—other former clients are also in that group, choosing to make the move back to Healthland.

Background

New Horizons Health Systems, Inc. operates a critical access hospital and rural health clinic in Owenton, KY, serving Owen County and its surrounding area. “We are often the first stop of care for our community both in the clinic and the hospital,” said Poe. “We are an important part of daily life here in Owenton. The health of our citizens in the area and the health of our local economy are dependent on our success as a healthcare provider. We have to do it right.”

New Horizons Health Systems opened the hospital in Owenton in 1951 under the name Owen County Memorial Hospital. At that time, there was
a federal program in place to ensure the hospital had stability and operated successfully. And it did, until the mid-1980s. Poe says that in the 80s, the leadership and county government didn’t quite understand healthcare, particularly in the rural environment, and ownership soon changed hands. It was not long after that change that the hospital went bankrupt.

“The previous owners really ran the place into the ground,” Poe said. “But in 2000, we secured a USDA loan, hired new physicians and invested in Healthland to do our billing. The solution met our business needs, but four years later when we secured a government grant to add new capabilities, we decided to use another vendor. Unfortunately, we learned the grass wasn’t greener with a different vendor. In fact, it seemed the new provider didn’t quite understand what goes on in a rural hospital. We had many issues with applications, especially in pharmacy, and the service and support was minimal at best.”

Once ARRA was passed in 2009, the New Horizons leadership team knew they needed a new solution to help them meet new regulatory guidelines such as Meaningful Use. The CEO formed a cross-functional team to begin their search.

Why Healthland

CEO Bernie Poe created a technology review team made up of the director of nursing and nursing staff, as well as physicians and a pharmacist. His goal was to establish a cross-functional review committee with varying levels of technology expertise. After the team was in place, they asked more than one dozen vendors to come into the hospital and present their solutions. The team also went on site visits as part of their comprehensive search.

After the Centriq product demonstration, the team found Healthland’s technology to be very different compared to their current antiquated and cumbersome solution that did not promote user adoption. They were excited and impressed, not only with the Centriq solution, but also with Healthland’s service model. New Horizons was having issues with client service and support, citing many instances of unresponsiveness and unwillingness to help them work through problems with their solution.

“One thing that was impressive was the sales representative from Healthland,” added Poe. “Even when we were with his competitor, he never gave up on us. And once he came out to show us Centriq, we really liked the functionality of the solution. We wanted to explore it further so I decided to send the team to Healthland headquarters in Minnesota to meet with leadership and to see other Healthland clients in action.”

The New Horizons’ team was also experiencing challenges in exchanging and sharing patient information, not to mention integration within the solution itself. “We work with many other large hospitals such as Lexington, the University of Kentucky, Louisville and Cincinnati, and we need to have the ability to easily share information,” said Poe. “Healthland offered us internal system integration—both within our departments as well as between the hospital and clinic. Externally, the Healthland solution enabled us to share our patient information with other healthcare providers in the area. The ability to exchange and share information both internally and externally was very important to us.”

In the end, New Horizons selected Healthland for its fully integrated platform, rural focus and long-term partnership. Hospital officials purchased Healthland’s complete clinical and financial solution in September 2011. The organization also purchased Centriq Clinic in Q4 2012.

The Solution

Healthland’s investment in R&D is second to none in the rural HIT market, resulting in superior products designed to meet client needs both today and well into the future. Centriq is a complete clinical and financial solution
built with a single database, allowing clinicians to update and access patient information at any time, from any care setting. The organization created Centriq with input from rural clinicians to ensure the solution is easy to learn and use, reducing training requirements and enabling clinicians to spend more time with patients. Healthland Centriq also makes patient information more accessible with fewer clicks, giving providers more quality time to help them make sound clinical decisions that improve patient outcomes.

“Quality healthcare is absolutely crucial to community wellness,” said Michael Karaman, Healthland Senior Vice President for Product. “That is what Centriq is all about – improving patient care across all settings. We have over 30 years of experience with rural healthcare providers and we’ve developed our product by working closely with rural clinicians to determine what is most important to them, such as: quick and easy access to patient data; preventative care tools that allow providers to be proactive; and increased productivity to provide more time for patients with less time on paperwork.”

Healthland Centriq is a fully integrated solution designed for inpatient, ambulatory and emergency department environments, as well as home health and long term care. The single user interface requires that data only be entered once to be accessible from all care delivery settings. This provides consistency across the continuum of care and increases usability and provider adoption. Centriq also includes an optimized provider work center, enabling providers to better manage patient care, quickly and easily. A recent survey by Sage Healthcare states that 77 percent of providers consider “ease of use and quickness” as top EHR characteristics. Healthland has delivered both with Centriq.

“Centriq fits our needs in both our critical access hospital and rural clinic,” said Poe. “The integration, accessibility of patient information, and functionality with Centriq are all critical to our success in delivering quality patient care.”

**Implementation**

With more than thirty years of implementing clinical and financial solutions, Healthland offers the simplest path to improved performance. “Healthland clients benefit from our successful implementations at more than 500 rural and small community hospitals in the United States,” said Jim Anderson, Healthland Senior Vice President of Services. “We use a best-practice approach based on what has worked on hospitals across the country. Our focus is long term. We not only offer support through the implementation but we are involved in the project for years to come, helping our clients focus on the big picture – improving hospital performance.”

Healthland shows hospitals how to use an EHR for maximum benefit. A well-functioning EHR can help a hospital improve outcomes in areas such as: A/R days, patient revenues, and patient care. Healthland also provides options for faster deployment and minimal downtime. From planning and scheduling to staff engagement, the services team knows how to help a hospital reach clinical and financial success.

“Today, the technology, customer care and support with Healthland are exactly what we need in an HIT partner,” added Poe. “Healthland listens and understands the unique needs and challenges in the rural healthcare environment. They were helpful throughout the implementation process and the training was great.”

The New Horizons team said the training was very successful for their hospital staff. Healthland Client Care members spent substantial time meeting with individual departments in the hospital to help with specific details in their daily activities – something the support team plans to continue in the future. In fact, Healthland has already scheduled additional training for ongoing support.
“Even now, if we have an issue or need help, the Healthland Client Care team is there for us,” Poe said. “Client support is vital for our success and Healthland team members are patient with us, understanding our level of knowledge and ability.”

**Provider Adoption and Results**

“Healthland Centriq is unique because it focuses on provider and nursing adoption,” added Poe. “That wasn’t the case with our previous vendor. Our staff is happy with Healthland because the solution meets their needs. In fact, one of our most technology-averse nurses has become one of the biggest supporters of Healthland.”

In addition to technology, Poe cites customer support, training, and value as key points his staff looked at when reviewing HIT providers. The hospital staff is already seeing improvements in productivity and increased access to patient information.

“What Healthland clients appreciate most from us are: our 30 years of experience in rural healthcare, our philosophy in treating clients as partners, and our on-going commitment that goes beyond implementation,” said Tom Ziel, Healthland Senior Vice President of Sales. “We’ve learned so much from our clients over the years and that has made us a better technology provider and a better partner. We design products and solutions that our clients need to be successful in today’s challenging environment.”

**Looking Ahead**

New Horizons Health Systems, Inc. is live with the complete Healthland Centriq solution. The next steps for the hospital staff will be to take advantage of all the educational tools Healthland has to offer to keep learning and improving their use of the system.

For other rural hospitals looking for a superior EHR, Bernie Poe says hospital staff should visit client sites and investigate. He stresses the importance of seeing the system in use. He suggested talking to staff from other hospitals to get a good idea of a vendor’s training and support capabilities. He also says to involve the staff because they are critical to success.

“We are very happy with our decision to go with Healthland,” Poe concluded. “For us, the most important thing is to care for our patients in the best way we can. I know 75 percent of the people who walk through our doors. They are my friends and neighbors. I want the best for them and I believe we can do that with Healthland.”

Want to learn more about successful EHR implementations, visit [www.healthland.com/resources/success_stories/](http://www.healthland.com/resources/success_stories/)

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