Network technology plays a pivotal role in today’s healthcare enterprise, connecting locations and carrying everything from data and medical records to live video interaction between health professionals, patients and peers. While the network technology used by different healthcare organizations can differ widely in terms of features, bandwidth and configuration, are there solutions that seem to drive the greatest ROI in the healthcare environment?

Spectrum Enterprise clients in the healthcare field believe there are, and they spoke to us about how they’re using network infrastructure to address pain points like constantly changing business and regulatory requirements. Here, several clients share their success stories about specific solutions that are helping them seize new opportunities to improve patient care, streamline administration and keep pace with the evolution of medicine.

Healthcare best practices
In this article we’ll review how Spectrum Enterprise clients have successfully put the following healthcare best practices into action:

Share knowledge and resources across the enterprise
For many healthcare organizations, rapid growth and consolidation means continually looking at how to bring new locations into the enterprise.

Make business continuity a top priority
All Spectrum Enterprise healthcare clients agree that they can’t risk having communications knocked out, so rock-solid network reliability is a key asset.

Invest in a quality experience for patients, family and staff
Spectrum Enterprise clients choose Fiber Connect TV for Healthcare because of its exceptional reliability and channel selection, designed specifically for healthcare settings, to help patients and families feel more at home.

Design your network to make HIPAA audits easier
The configuration of the network solution is instrumental in achieving HIPAA/HITECH requirements for system availability, disaster recovery and redundancy.

Build in the agility to seize opportunities
Read about how a fiber-based solution supports rapid expansion and gives healthcare organizations the agility to “turn up” bandwidth and connectivity as needed.
Crystal Run Healthcare uses its own high-speed Ethernet Private LAN (EP-LAN) to make Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) and other resources available wherever they’re needed.

**Share knowledge and resources across the enterprise**

For many healthcare organizations, rapid growth and consolidation means continually looking at how to bring new locations into the enterprise. The edge goes to organizations that minimize the need to duplicate staff, equipment and resources between locations.

For example, Jim Lowder of OhioHealth is using a high-speed, high-capacity Ethernet Private Line (EPL) network to support streaming two-way audio and video. This network lets skilled ICU “intensivists” at one of its facilities remotely monitor critical patients in hospitals without 24-hour access to onsite specialized ICU staff. Lowder says that this doesn’t “replace the physicians and nurses that are at a facility...but it’s a level of oversight that ordinarily would not be available in a more remote location.”

Likewise, Dr. Greg Spencer notes that Crystal Run Healthcare uses its own high-speed Ethernet Private LAN (EP-LAN) to make Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) and other resources available wherever they’re needed across the multi-specialty practice. Spencer adds that by having this big picture available to all providers at all locations, quality of care and cost efficiency are higher because “we’re less likely to repeat tests.”

Crystal Run’s network also supports teleworking by administrative staff so the need for office space can be reduced—a significant savings, given Crystal Run’s rapid growth.
Make business continuity a top priority
With critical data, communications, applications, patient care and safety all depending on the network, healthcare organizations can’t have service go down. This holds true even when facilities like OhioHealth’s smaller hospitals or Access: Supports for Living’s group homes are in remote, rural areas where it can be hard to find reliable service providers. All Spectrum Enterprise healthcare clients agree that they can’t risk having communications knocked out, so rock-solid network reliability is a key asset—and so is eliminating single points of failure.

Philip Moya of San Antonio Kidney Disease Center, for example, has established two paths to connect clinics to the data center. Should the fiber EP-LAN connectivity go down at any location, the secondary DOCSIS (cable) modem establishes a VPN link back to the data center. This gives Moya confidence that disruptions won’t, in his words, “take us out.”

Invest in a quality experience for patients, family and staff
With patients confined to bed, watching TV is often all there is to do. To create the highest-quality experience for patients and families, Joseph Gunnells of the Center for Hospice and Palliative Care chose HDTV service because of its exceptional reliability and channel selection, designed specifically for healthcare settings, to help patients and families feel more at home. Gunnells chose the Spectrum Enterprise Healthcare TV solution because it allows him to insert custom content, such as channels with meditation, music or live video from its gardens. Plus, recalls Gunnells, “even through our big storm, everything was up 100 percent.”

For Gunnells, having the high-speed bandwidth to support a public WiFi network is also critical to a quality experience. A hospice stay, for example, can sometimes last several weeks. Without the WiFi network keeping family members connected to work, many would find it impossible to spend time with their loved ones.

Tailoring technology is also essential for the community-based rehabilitation agency Access: Supports for Living, and Internet, phone and television have been customized for the number of staff and residents as well as each location’s specific needs for communications, distance learning, fire and safety systems, entertainment and the exchange of medical information and case files. Jim DeStefano, the agency’s Executive Vice President and Director of External Affairs and Development, believes that the completeness of this solution has been an important factor in helping Access: Supports for Living grow so rapidly “from a $25 million system of care to over $80 million.”
This connectivity and control give Moya additional business continuity options, such as using one of the healthcare system’s most distant clinics to house a second (backup) data center.

Design your network to make HIPAA audits easier
The configuration of the network solution is instrumental in achieving HIPAA/HITECH requirements for system availability, disaster recovery and redundancy. OhioHealth’s Jim Lowder notes that it is important to be able to go beyond rigid service offerings for connectivity that are engineered to meet regulatory requirements as well as business and patient care requirements.

To make it easier to pass the “Data in Motion” portion of HIPAA audits, Philip Moya of the San Antonio Kidney Disease Center decided to add an extra layer of security with an EPL or EP-LAN so its data doesn’t touch anyone else’s network. It also backhauls all Internet access through its own main site and filters. If they have to failover onto the public Internet, everything remains encrypted through AES256 VPN tunnels. This connectivity and control give Moya additional business continuity options, such as using one of the healthcare system’s most distant clinics to house a second (backup) data center.

Build in the agility to seize opportunities
Jim Lowder at OhioHealth has structured the organization’s fiber-based solution to support rapid expansion, enabling it to close or open offices quickly. Fiber also gives Greg Spencer at Crystal Run Healthcare the agility to “turn up” bandwidth and connectivity as needed, supporting applications that Crystal Run is using to apply patient analytics, business intelligence and population health data as it shifts to a value-based business model that emphasizes outcomes over transactions.

Although the size and business model of these organizations are different, their success stories share the common themes of using technology to support business continuity, the patient experience, and resource sharing as well as the flexibility to meet business and regulatory requirements. To learn how these solutions could contribute to your own healthcare success story, visit enterprise.spectrum.com or contact your Spectrum Enterprise team.