



### The Challenge

Improve patient care and practice productivity of a multi-office New England OB-GYN practice by allowing doctors to securely access patient records from remote locations and eliminate the need to physically transport files while complying with HIPAA and area hospital regulations.

### The SonicWALL Solution

SonicWALL SSL-VPN enables doctors to securely view current patient files from home offices and hospitals while staying in compliance with HIPAA and area hospital policies.

### The Results

- Doctors quickly and conveniently access secure patient records from any location, eliminating the need for on-call doctors to rush to the office for patient records.
- Greatly reduced incidents of lost or misfiled charts.
- Eliminated need for dedicated staff resources to transport charts, freeing up resources to focus on patient care.

County Obstetrics and Gynecology is a progressive, 11 doctor practice with offices in four Connecticut towns surrounding Yale University in New Haven. Three years ago, CountyOB turned to Stemp Systems, an outsourced technology management group and SonicWALL® channel partner, to help the organization with an ambitious plan to fully automate the practice. As one of the first steps toward automation, CountyOB scanned thousands of patient charts, which freed up hundreds of lineal feet of filing shelves and allowed the practice to construct new exam rooms where files once stood.

CountyOB wanted to improve patient care, as well as staff and doctor productivity, by allowing its doctors to access patient records remotely, especially from their home offices and at area hospitals during baby deliveries and other patient hospitalizations. Prior to the automation initiative, the practice would have to make copies of patient's charts and fax or hand-deliver the copies to the hospital in preparation for the delivery. This was a time consuming and error-prone process. Providing access to the files remotely would allow doctors to quickly access patient information from wherever they were working and allow office staff to focus on patient care and practice management.

Like all healthcare organizations, CountyOB must comply with a variety of government and industry regulations, including HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). The primary objective of HIPAA is to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of patients' health information when it is stored, maintained or transmitted electronically. Once patient records were available on CountyOB's computer network, the doctors needed a secure, HIPAA-compliant solution to be able to access patient charts remotely.

In addition, CountyOB was restricted by hospital IT security policies that limited remote access to patient charts. These policies generally do not allow doctors to load any software on hospital workstations and don't permit unsecured laptops access to hospital networks and the Internet. This made it impossible for CountyOB's doctors to access patient records using standard VPN client software to connect to their office firewall.

"We realized that this automation project presented a number of challenges for CountyOB, but with the industry moving quickly to electronic health records and more automated systems, we needed to prepare our practice from a security and technology standpoint to help our doctors and patients," said Tina D'Amico, MHA and practice administrator for CountyOB. "Simply creating the electronic records were not enough. We recognized that we needed a secure VPN solution that would allow our doctors to take advantage of our automation, and that would meet the industry and our area hospitals' security and privacy standards."

## County Obstetrics and Gynecology

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*-Tina D'Amico  
MHA & Practice Administrator  
CountyOB*

### SonicWALL Benefits

- SonicWALL SSL-VPN seamlessly integrates behind almost any firewall, enabling organizations to leverage existing network infrastructure without additional hardware.
- Clientless connectivity eliminates the need for a pre-installed VPN client and freeing administrators from installing and updating a client on every PC.
- Unrestricted concurrent user tunnels reduce the costs associated with deploying a scalable secure remote access solution.
- Administrators can create policies that limit users to specific applications and resources to prevent unauthorized access with granular policy configuration controls.

CountyOB turned to Stemp Systems to find a solution that would allow their doctors to have the convenient remote access they needed while protecting patient data and conforming to hospital policies. As a SonicWALL partner, Stemp Systems provides companies with a variety of security solutions, including the SonicWALL SSL-VPN, which provides secure network and application access for remote users.

The SonicWALL SSL-VPN appliance was easily connected by CountyOB's practice administrator and configured remotely by Stemp technicians in less than two hours. The SSL-VPN appliance integrated seamlessly behind the practice's current network security infrastructure, and eliminated the need for each doctor to install a VPN client on his/her computer. In addition, for doctors using hospital computers, the SSL-VPN solution provides a secure, customizable Web interface that displays only files and applications that are available to the physician based on practice policy.

Following a short trial period, Stemp was able to provide all the CountyOB doctors remote access to patient charts. The SonicWALL SSL-VPN appliance allows for an unrestricted number of concurrent user tunnels, which allows all of CountyOB's doctors to work without concern of a network bottleneck or delayed access times. CountyOB doctors can now securely access pertinent medical data "24/7," regardless of their location. The solution has also helped doctors provide even better patient care since now they have the most current patient charts available at all times.

A welcome by-product of this greater accessibility is that doctors working "on call" no longer need to rush to the office to review patient charts. Additionally, the incidents of temporarily lost and misfiled charts has dropped significantly and the practice no longer employs staff dedicated to "running" charts between file rooms and exam rooms, and between remote offices. Doctors can also use SonicWALL SSL-VPN to access their interoffice e-mail, allowing them to stay on top of issues in the office while they are working remotely.

"Going paperless was a major step forward for our practice," added D'Amico. "I no longer have to worry about medical information leaving the office on paper or copies of current patient information getting to the hospital labor floor. We now have a secure, HIPAA-compliant solution that allows my physicians to access the files they need from anywhere, at any time; from the labor and delivery room to their home office."



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