



BlackBerry Customer Success Story

Hospital Improves Disaster Preparedness and Response Capabilities with the Help of BlackBerry Smartphone Application



THE CHALLENGE

In the aftermath of infectious disease outbreaks, such as SARS in 2003 and H1N1 in 2009, significant emphasis has been placed on healthcare emergency preparedness. In Canada, SARS led to 44 deaths, thousands of quarantine orders and the declaration of a province-wide health emergency. Toronto was the epicenter of the epidemic in Canada and healthcare workers, who were exposed to the virus while treating infected patients, were among the hardest hit. During the crisis, Bridgepoint Health received updates from the government twice a day about hospital closures, infection rates and additional epidemic-related information.

“We were manning our command center around the clock, but our directives were coming several hours apart,” said Monica Jacobs, the Director of Patient Relations and Risk Management at Bridgepoint Health. “We knew from colleagues in other hospitals that closures were happening in between updates, so we had to make decisions without all the information.”

During this crisis, it was clear to the Bridgepoint team that more immediate access to information would allow them to make better and timelier decisions to protect their patients, visitors and staff in an emergency. A better system of receiving information and updates would also help in the event of network, email and phone line failure due to volume.

THE SOLUTION

“We knew we wanted to take the lessons learned from our SARS and H1N1 experience and leverage technology to improve communication, response times and access to information,” Jacobs said. Bridgepoint Health partnered with the School of Emergency Management at Toronto’s George Brown College, a leader in emergency management education, and Tenet Computer Group Inc. (Tenet) to pilot a BlackBerry® solution. They deployed Tenet’s PINpoint application, a BlackBerry smartphone application designed to collect information from authoritative sources and disseminate it to the appropriate people in near real time. Best of all, the PINpoint application can function normally even when phone, text and email services are down.

Leveraging PINpoint’s secure data collection and distribution technology, Bridgepoint Health worked with Tenet to customize its existing emergency toolkit. Chapters in the hospital’s 300-page emergency manual were edited down to fit a single page of easy-to-follow instructions. The pared down pages were then stored through the PINpoint application on each BlackBerry smartphone making it possible to access information even if corporate servers are not functioning. Periodic updates can also be distributed automatically.

Bridgepoint Health is a complex chronic care and rehabilitation hospital in Toronto, Canada. Bridgepoint has over 1,400 staff including physicians, nurses, non-clinical staff and volunteers that focus on delivering care for inpatients and outpatients living with two or more long-term and progressive illnesses, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes or AIDS. These patients require highly specialized care that considers the complexity of their condition, as they are extremely vulnerable in the event of an outbreak of infectious diseases, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and H1N1 influenza.

Industry: Life Sciences

Region: North America

Company Size:
Large Organization - 1,400+ employees

Email Platform: Novell® GroupWise

Solution:

- PINpoint by Tenet Computer Group Inc.
- BlackBerry® smartphone
- BlackBerry® Enterprise Server
- BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™)

“Thanks to our BlackBerry solution, we are better prepared to make timely decisions during a healthcare crisis – and that will help us better protect our patients and staff.”

Monica Jacobs
Director, Patient Relations and
Risk Management
Bridgepoint Health

In addition to the manual, the hospital’s emergency contact list, which includes contact information for the local, provincial and federal health authorities as well as internal staff, was uploaded, constantly being updated and easily accessible. Every BlackBerry smartphone has a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) that enables the BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™) service to bypass traditional email infrastructures, should they become unavailable. During a crisis, staff members are encouraged to communicate using BBM because it can continue to work even when phone and email systems fail.

Bridgepoint Health’s BlackBerry solution was put to the test by George Brown’s School of Emergency Management in two high-pressure pandemic event simulations offered through the college’s state of the art technology. “The simulations were great because we were able to familiarize ourselves with the PINpoint application and the BlackBerry solution before a real crisis hits,” said Jacobs. “In an emergency setting, getting the most up-to-date information and having what you need at your fingertips is vital – our BlackBerry solution makes getting that information easy.”

BRIDGEPOINT HEALTH’S BENEFITS

“We have gone from having a basic level of response that meets our jurisdictional requirements to having a leading edge, state-of-the-art response procedure,” said Jacobs. “Our BlackBerry solution has allowed us to plan and prepare our systems and people in advance of the next healthcare crisis. And because PINpoint leverages the BlackBerry infrastructure, we know that our information is secure.”

Before the PINpoint for BlackBerry solution, Jacobs would have been responsible for finding or receiving the updates and then rewriting and distributing them on the fly. Should a pandemic or an emergency break out today, Bridgepoint Health believes its automated collection and distribution of information will result in a drastic reduction in the amount of time previously spent on gathering, synthesizing and distributing information.

Because the emergency plan is stored right on the BlackBerry smartphone, senior and on-call employees have immediate, dependable and mobile access to step-by-step instructions. “When crisis strikes, it’s hard to remember what to do and you don’t have the time to rifle through a 300-page document,” said Jacobs. “Because I have the emergency plans right at my fingertips, I now know important information, such as which wards can be made into an isolation unit with piped-in oxygen and back-up generator power.”

To achieve this multi-partner pilot project, Bridgepoint Health leveraged its BlackBerry® Enterprise Server and BlackBerry infrastructure, upgraded some of its technology and invested time in rewriting emergency documents for greater usability.

Currently, Bridgepoint Health’s BlackBerry solution is focused on the threat of pandemic but they are so pleased with the results that the senior team is considering expanding the solution to respond to all emergency codes and plans. “It’s because we care for so many vulnerable people that it’s important for us to be prepared in any situation,” said Jacobs. “Our ability to respond quickly and safely is part of our commitment to our staff, our patients and their families.”

KEY BENEFITS

- Helps to improve response time during a pandemic
- Mobile access to emergency plans and systems
- Improved communication between senior and on-call staff during an emergency
- Safer environment for patients and staff during an emergency

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