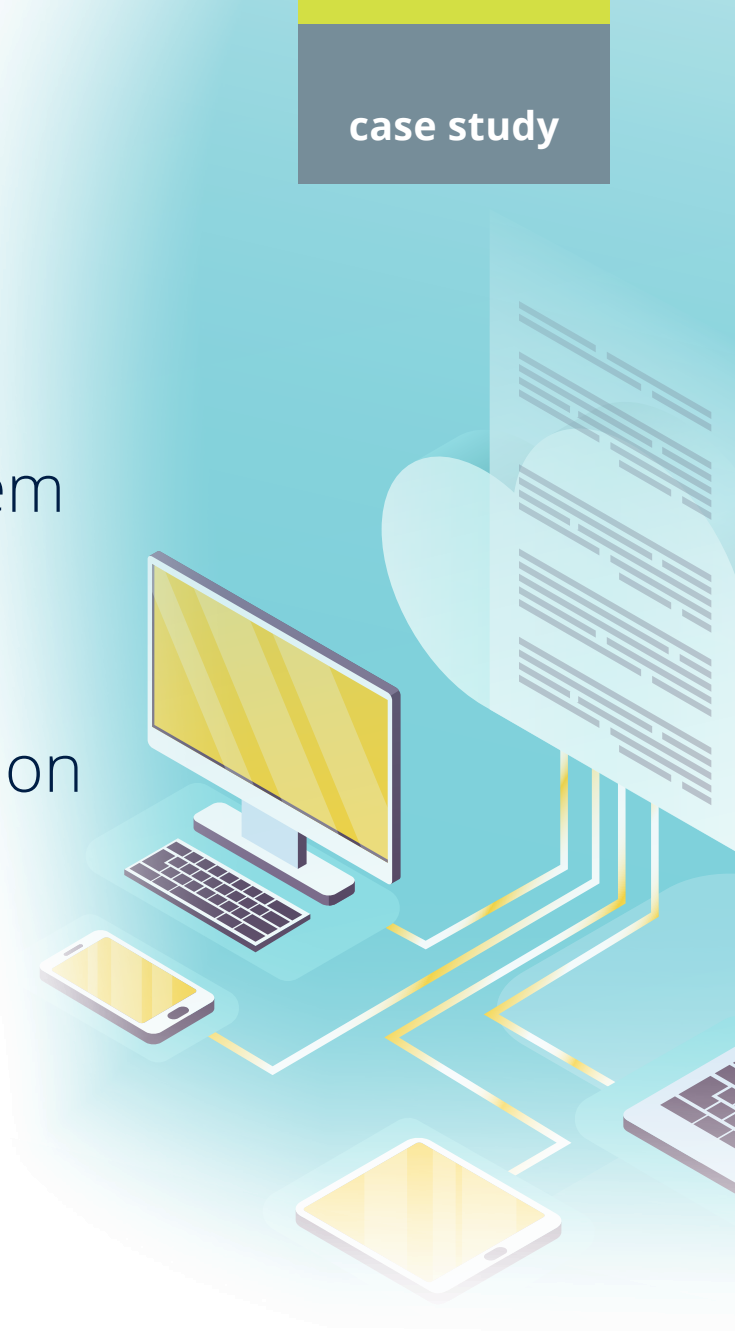


William Osler Health System turns to Interbit Data's NetDelivery for COVID-19 emergency mass notification

William Osler Health System is a full-service hospital system that serves 1.3 million residents within the Central West Local Health Integration Network in metropolitan Toronto, Canada. It operates three hospitals: Brampton Civic Hospital, Etobicoke General Hospital and the Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness. The sites provide a comprehensive range of acute care, outpatient services including an expansive Mental Health and Addictions program, and community-based services.



In March, due to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario, the government asked that all Ontario hospitals scale down on non-urgent surgeries and clinical activity to help healthcare staff and physicians preserve capacity for possible elevation in COVID cases that would require hospital care. This left Osler with a daunting challenge: Staff had less than a week to notify every provider that had referred patients for appointments that there were going to be cancellations and no scheduling of new appointments.

Faced with this unprecedented demand, Osler staff quickly realized they had no way to easily notify all the providers from outside clinics, some of them many hundreds of miles away, about the cancellations. The health system had a paging system to send out mass communications to internal staff members, but no way of communicating externally to the more than 5,800 providers who refer patients to its hospitals. The only option was to manually contact each individual clinic by phone — a process that likely would entail assigning four or five employees to look up contact information and place calls full-time for at least a week, and then hope that staff at the mostly shuttered clinics were monitoring their voicemails.



So, Osler turned to Interbit Data for help, having been a customer for roughly a decade. Osler was already a user of NetDelivery, Interbit Data's automated report distribution solution that allows hospitals to securely distribute information from Healthcare Information Systems (HCIS) to multiple recipients and locations via fax, email, secure text messaging and several other options.

Staff contacted Interbit Data customer support on a Monday asking for help and gave them a list of all physicians who had referred patients to the health system within the last six months. Interbit Data loaded and formatted the desired memo about cancellations and routed it to the list of providers. The automated notification went out to all 5,800 contacts via NetDelivery the following day, within 24 hours of the request being made. As is always the case with NetDelivery, the recipient clinics were able to choose their preferred method of receiving the information, such as email or fax.

"It was never even a question of how we would get it done — NetDelivery is so ingrained in our health system, I think we knew within five minutes that NetDelivery would be the way to go," said Craig Linklater, applications manager at William Osler's Brampton Civic Hospital. "The amount of time, hours, and manpower we saved on this effort by using Interbit Data is massive."



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Applications Manager
William Osler's Brampton
Civic Hospital

Creative solutions to scheduling challenges

In addition to helping with COVID-19 challenges, the health system has found other novel and useful applications for NetDelivery as well.

For example, Osler has a team of mental health providers at a clinic where certain patients are automatically scheduled for follow-up appointments when they're discharged from the hospital. Osler has a system to create those appointments, but the system lacked the functionality to directly notify the clinic of the appointments and instead required staff to manually email the clinical about upcoming appointments. That led to complaints from the clinic that they were receiving fragmented schedule notifications that lacked information about who the patients were and when they were scheduled.

Osler's solution was to feed the report generated from the scheduling app into NetDelivery, which could then send the information automatically to the clinic in a more regular and centralized way that was also compliant with Canada's Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA).

"I think this was the first time that we had utilized NetDelivery to automate the sending of an appointment schedule out to a clinic," Linklater said. "That speaks volumes to how ingrained NetDelivery is; the fact that the first thing I thought of, when posed with this challenge, was NetDelivery, even though all we'd ever used it for up until that point was clinical reports."

Similarly, oncologists at Osler have started to use NetDelivery for notifications about upcoming telehealth appointments with their patients, many of whom are at especially high risk of severe illness if exposed to COVID-19. Previously, appointments were being printed out in clerical departments and reviewed in person. Doctors have now incorporated NetDelivery into their scheduling system to distribute that information remotely every week, helping them to conduct virtual visits with patients.

"The idea that we always, quickly think of NetDelivery to solve these types of distribution issues shows its versatility and how much we rely on it," Linklater said. "NetDelivery is our safety net. When you know you have that kind of support, you're able solve problems quickly and maximize your value-add to the organization in what can be considered a stressful environment."



NetDelivery is our safety net, and we know that requests will always be handled quickly. When you know you have that kind of support, it takes a little bit of the stress away.

Interbit Data provides software automation solutions that ensure your patient care teams have secure, uninterrupted and reliable access to clinical and administrative data when and where they need it.

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251 W. Central St. #36 ■ Natick, MA 01760 ■ 508.647.0013 ■ interbitdata.com