OVERVIEW

Ochsner Health System is southeast Louisiana’s largest non-profit, academic, multi-specialty healthcare delivery system with eight hospitals and more than 38 health centers. It is the only Louisiana hospital recognized by U.S. News and World Report as a “Best Hospital” across seven specialty categories. Ochsner’s IT department is also ranked number one in Louisiana and fifth in the nation by Healthcare IT News magazine in its list of “Best Hospital IT Departments.”

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

As New Orleans-based Ochsner embraced an electronic medical records (EMR) system and increasing volumes of patient information were captured digitally, the healthcare system’s storage requirements were growing rapidly. Ochsner’s acquisition of five hospitals in six years also was driving infrastructure expansion.

“Our EMR environment had evolved into a patchwork of more than 30 separate applications,” explains Doug Lauterbach, Ochsner’s Assistant Vice President, Technology. “On top of that, our storage environment was not keeping up with growing performance and data availability demands. We needed to consolidate our EMR applications onto a standard, enterprise-wide EMR infrastructure and an extremely resilient and scalable storage platform.”

SOLUTIONS

To deliver improved performance, reliability, and patient care, Ochsner decided to consolidate approximately 35 mainframe-based EMR applications running on mainframe-based IBM Shark storage onto a new Epic EMR infrastructure. EMC® Symmetrix® VMAX® enterprise storage configured with Flash and spinning disk drives supports Ochsner’s new Epic EMR, as well as OnBase, the document management system for Epic. Ochsner plans to migrate other core applications, including Lawson and SOFT lab system, to VMAX storage.

One VMAX is deployed in the health system’s production data center in New Orleans and a second VMAX at its disaster recovery (DR) facility 500 miles away in Nashville, Tenn. Ochsner also implemented EMC VPLEX® storage federation solution to enable disaster recovery and fast, flexible migration of storage resources between both data centers.
Willy Schley, Ochsner’s Technology Director, says, “We needed a high-availability storage platform for Epic that could keep up with our growth. VMAX stood out as the ideal choice. It’s certified for Epic, and EMC has extensive Epic expertise to ensure a smooth implementation. We also liked that VMAX and VPLEX provide scalable performance and high data availability, which are essential in an environment where quality patient care is a critical priority.”

**PERFORMANCE AND AVAILABILITY FOR EPIC EMR**

VMAX is part of a comprehensive EMC infrastructure that also includes EMC unified storage, which supports Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, and Citrix, among other environments. Applications virtualized with VMware® vSphere™, including Novell GroupWise email, Kronos time and attendance, and all core Microsoft services such as DNS, DHCP, and Active Directory also reside on EMC unified storage. Approximately 80 percent of Ochsner’s infrastructure is virtualized.

With VMAX, Ochsner has enjoyed a smooth transition to the Epic EMR. “VMAX is living up to our expectations,” observes Schley. “We have had no performance issues or downtime, and with Flash drives as our primary database storage for Epic, we don’t expect any. The entire deployment has been a great experience and the support from EMC has been excellent.”

“Support can sometimes fall off of the radar when purchase decisions are made, but it is an absolutely critical component of a purchase decision,” explains Schley. “EMC’s online support capabilities help us find information quickly and we have total confidence that when we pick up the phone to call EMC support, we will be connected with someone that has the expertise to help.”

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Willy Schley
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Schley also cited that the staff has learned how to administer and manage the VMAX infrastructure with minimal training.

“The IT staff picked up VMAX skills very quickly because the management tools are so strong and intuitive,” Schley commented. “We’re also able to very easily get in-depth views of the storage environment so we can respond quickly to changing requirements.”

**HIPAA COMPLIANCE WITH FULL DATA ENCRYPTION**

VMAX is helping Ochsner maximize protection of its critical data with EMC Data at Rest Encryption (DARE), which is implemented on the VMAX at its DR site.

“We’re subject to more stringent federal regulations governing the privacy of our data at our disaster recovery center because it’s off campus,” explains Schley. “With DARE on the VMAX, we get full data encryption, which is required to comply with HIPAA and HITECH.”
RECOVERING THE ENTIRE EMR INFRASTRUCTURE IN LESS THAN ONE HOUR

With VPLEX, Ochsner gained an easy, reliable solution for disaster recovery, enabling automated failover and mobility. The health system is using VPLEX to replicate Windows Server data for Epic, as well as approximately two terabytes of OnBase document imaging data from the production VMAX to its disaster recovery site.

"VPLEX has worked very well moving the data to the recovery site quickly and efficiently, and recovery is very fast," reports Schley. "In testing, we recovered the entire Epic infrastructure in less than one hour using a largely automated failover strategy."

Lauterbach also anticipates using VPLEX for storage migration between the two data centers for testing and development purposes.

"We see other use cases for VPLEX such as flipping environments back and forth between sites to support test and development at both locations without impact to end users," he says. "VPLEX also will help us accelerate our virtualization and private cloud strategy."

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local representative or authorized reseller—or visit us at www.EMC.com.

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