

2020 NPCR OREGON STATE CANCER REGISTRY SUCCESS STORY

STORY CATEGORY: Registry Operations

STORY TITLE: CANCER REGISTRY TRANSITION – REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE

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SUMMARY

The Oregon State Cancer Registry (OSCaR) staff are a team of knowledgeable, dedicated professionals continuously working to improve operations, but for as long as they could remember, they were hampered by slow data processing speeds and missing software functionality. In October 2019, after more than two years gathering permissions and slogging through requisitions, a dedicated Citrix server was brought online that helped solve a few significant registry operational issues.

CHALLENGE

Over the years OSCaR staff have experienced significantly slow processing time with the main cancer database. At times, large files and reports took an entire weekend to run, only to find the job unfinished on Monday because of a computing error. Remote access was difficult to say the least, and certain applications such as the Registry Plus suite were either poor, such as 30 minutes to upload an eMarc Plus file, or all together non-functional, such as the inability for multiple users to access a single Abstract Plus file. OSCaR relied on traditional, shared network server located centrally within the State Data Center. The challenge posed was the need to update the main database to a virtual server that would allow for faster processing speeds, remote accessibility, and improved function.

SOLUTION

Over a two-year span, a dedicated Citrix server was envisioned, requisitioned, developed, built and finally brought online in early October 2019. A Citrix server is a desktop virtualization product that allows an Information Technology department to host centralized desktops and applications. Citrix allows staff to virtually tunnel into a server and remotely access desktops and applications with any hardware while maintaining the original look and feel of the applications. Additionally, this server provides safe and secure connections to maintain and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the protected health information stored in the OSCaR database.

RESULTS

Two weeks after migrating the main database to a Citrix server, OSCaR's entire work area was made physically inaccessible for (10) days due to an office suite reconfiguration. While ramping up for Call for Data, staff were required to use remote access to continue registry operations, but because the Citrix server was in place, all staff still had access to the main database via VPN with or without their virtual desktop. A few hiccups occurred along the way, but staff overcame the learning curve and maintained operations relatively seamlessly. This proved invaluable six months later when COVID-19 hit, and staff were once again forced to work remotely.

Additionally, processing speeds were much faster. Reports no longer timed out, files uploaded significantly faster and staff were less frustrated with the overall performance of the system. The Citrix server also allowed for improved system function. For example, multiple staff were able to access, make changes to and save single copies of files using Abstract Plus. The result was improved coordination, streamlined operations and improved user satisfaction.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

While many challenges were overcome moving to a Citrix server, some new challenges were subsequently created. A prime drawback is that access to database backfiles generated when performing basic registry functions requires permissions and knowledge to access. For example, extra steps are required to save reports, and understanding the technology takes some time and savvy. For eMaRC Plus, processing speed has not changed noticeably, and accessing backfiles for this program is more difficult now. Renewed efforts to overcome these new obstacles are required to ensure continued overall improvement in operations.

REGISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

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OSCaR Website:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/CHRONICDISEASE/CANCER/OSCAR/Pages/index.aspx>