

PPMC

Healthcare provider extends ISA Server protection to Public Instant Messaging for HIPAA compliance

An April 2003 deadline to meet U.S. Department of Health and Human Services HIPAA regulations on electronic transmissions to ensure the confidentiality of patients' medical records came as healthcare organizations were beginning to look seriously at Instant Messaging as a communications tool.

Solution Overview

Company
PPMC

Customer Profile

Primary Provider Management Company (PPMC) has been an industry leader providing solutions to the medical industry for over 19 years. They serve over 200,000 MediCal, Medicare and commercial managed care members and are affiliated with health plans servicing most of Southern California.

Business Situation

Organizations that deal with patient records, including hospitals, research universities, clinical research organizations, and pharmaceutical companies, are required to have HIPAA-compliant systems that ensure the privacy of patient records in place by April 14, 2003. Public Instant Messaging, a fast growing communications technology jeopardizes HIPAA compliance

Company Description

Primary Provider Management Company (PPMC) has been an industry leader providing solutions to the medical industry for over 19 years. They offer a variety of administrative services for the managed care industry including contracting physician networks, claims processing, utilization and quality management, credentialing, financial reporting management, and provider/member benefits.

PPMC services most of Southern California with over 200,000 MediCal, Medicare and commercial managed care members across its own provider networks and also has management contracts with several other physician and hospital based networks.

Situation

The administrative services offered by PPMC result in over 100,000 electronic transactions each month that include public Instant Messaging between nurses in physicians offices and hospital workers. In addition to traditional network security concerns PPMC faced U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to protect patient privacy. It had selected Microsoft ISA Server to control access to its network and sought an effective means to extend ISA Server protection to allow nurses to continue to utilize instant messaging without breaking HIPAA compliance guidelines.

With the potential for hundreds of physician's offices participating in IM conversations and a desire to leverage the resulting improvement from the real-time exchange of administrative and benefits information, PPMC required a solution that could both restrict access to IM and monitor the conversations for potential privacy disclosure.

PPMC was also concerned about known security vulnerabilities including hacker vulnerabilities, viruses, and worms that target Public IM. In particular IM could be used to transfer files, and that those files bypassed server antivirus engines that the organization had installed.

"Akonix L7 offers a compelling solution to public instant messaging management."

Nevet Basker
Director of Business
Development
Microsoft Corporation

Solution

L7 Enterprise from Akonix Systems was selected by PPMC to manage its IM use, provide security and the ability to control and audit conversations. Akonix makes IM usage HIPAA compliant by logging IM conversations and through its Active Policy Enforcement. This flexible enforcement approach allows PPMC to specify keywords, phrases and patterns that might represent HIPAA violations and have suspect communications flagged, generate real-time alerts or in some cases, blocked with warning messages to the sender. Akonix L7 includes a patent-pending technology that ensures that IM messages cannot circumvent its protection and policy application. Additional policy management features allow control over who is allowed to use IM file transfers, what types of files they could transfer and could put limits on file sizes.

"Healthcare organizations are faced with making sure that activity such as public IM (AOL, MSN, YAHOO! and ICQ) does not compromise sensitive patient information", said Michael Chipperfield, Chief Information Officer for PPMC, an industry leader in healthcare management services. "Akonix, with its active policy enforcement approach, makes sure that companies like ours can remain in compliance with HIPAA rules, by preventing potential violations from occurring."

PPMC found that Akonix was the only Public IM solution that offered direct integration with Microsoft's ISA Server. This unique option eased their deployment concerns. In fact, PPMC install the Akonix L7 gateway on the same systems running ISA Server.

"Secure, confidential, and private communications as well as electronic data transfer is critical for any Healthcare organization, especially under HIPAA," said Chipperfield. "Until now, public Instant Messaging has been a potential source of unsecured, exposed and often unauthorized electronic communication vehicle within a healthcare organization's network. We chose Akonix L7, with its integration to Microsoft ISA Server firewall, to allow public IM to be used in a secure, managed and confidential environment."

About Akonix

Akonix Systems, Inc. headquartered in San Diego, California is an award-winning provider of enterprise software that transforms public Instant Messaging (IM) into a safe, secure and manageable business-critical application. Akonix solutions enable organizations to secure, manage and report on IM and Peer-to-Peer file sharing usage, while satisfying Federal, industry and corporate compliance requirements.

Copyright © 2003 Akonix Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Copyrights used herein are the properties of their respective manufacturers. Rev-CS051103PC



Akonix Systems, Inc.
info@akonix.com
www.akonix.com
619-814-2300