

## South County Hospital Simplifies Direct Secure Messaging Using iatricSystems™ DirectConnect Gateway™



**OBJECTIVE:** South County Hospital had to meet Meaningful Use Stage 2 measures that require secure messaging, including Transitions of Care (ToC), and View, Download, and Transmit (VDT), therefore allowing the secure sharing of electronic healthcare information with other providers. The hospital wanted to use Direct Secure Messaging (DSM) as a scalable, low-cost way to exchange information securely while complying with Meaningful Use.

**SITUATION:** South County Hospital is a 100-bed acute-care hospital in Wakefield, Rhode Island. The hospital has a MEDITECH Client/Server Healthcare Information System (HIS), as well as the iatricSystems™ Clinical Document Exchange (CDE) product, and the iatricSystems PtAccess® patient portal. They engaged Inpriva as their Health Information Service Provider (HISP) for Direct Secure Messaging related services.

**SOLUTION:** South County Hospital uses iatricSystems DirectConnect Gateway™ to provide secure communication of clinical information with other providers using their Direct addresses. Via its Windows-based platform, DirectConnect Gateway integrates with both CDE and PtAccess, while also providing the required Direct connectivity between the Hospital and its HISP. The Hospital can now automatically send a Continuity of Care Document (CCD), via Direct Secure Messaging and DirectConnect Gateway. Patients using the PtAccess patient portal can also take advantage of the same DirectConnect Gateway to transmit their CCD to their providers using their Direct address. iatricSystems also provided valuable technical assistance to ensure a smooth implementation, leveraging their in-depth knowledge of the hospital's MEDITECH environment.

**RESULTS:** During the Hospital's Meaningful Use Stage 2 reporting period, 36% of all patient transfers and referrals were supported with the required transition of care document (CCD), sent electronically to other providers' Direct addresses—easily surpassing the 10% required threshold. That number is growing steadily as more providers and facilities enroll in Direct Secure Messaging. South County Hospital now has an easy, secure way to generate clinical summaries automatically and share them electronically so patients and caregivers get this vital information promptly.

*"DirectConnect Gateway is a fast, easy, and inexpensive way to connect with any provider in the country with a Direct address."*

— Gary Croteau  
Chief Information Officer  
South County Hospital



South County Hospital is a 100-bed acute-care hospital in Wakefield, Rhode Island, and the flagship of the South County Hospital Healthcare System, providing comprehensive inpatient, outpatient, and home health services. Like other hospitals, South County Hospital had to meet Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements for the secure exchange of electronic health information (specifically, Core Objective 6 for patient access to View, Download, and Transmit their health information and Core Objective 12 for Transitions of Care). There was also a larger issue — how to communicate securely with other providers and facilities outside the hospital's network in a way that was easy and affordable. They recognized that Direct Secure Messaging (DSM) was the best approach for their requirements and set off in search of an appropriate solution.

**Secure, Seamless, and Easy to Use**

After evaluating different Direct Secure Messaging products (starting with the one from its HIS vendor), South County Hospital selected iatricSystems DirectConnect Gateway, a Windows-based platform that provides secure two-way communication using the Direct Secure Messaging protocol standard. DirectConnect Gateway meets all Meaningful Use requirements for Direct Secure Messaging and supports any hospital HIS or ambulatory EMR system. DirectConnect Gateway also provides a combination of simplicity and functionality that makes exchanging clinical information with patients and other providers and facilities a routine part of daily operations.

“Using DirectConnect Gateway, we can share clinical summaries with our partners along the transition of care chain,” says Gary Croteau, CIO at South County Hospital. Gary adds that feedback from the hospital community has been very positive. “Recipients are very happy to receive CCDs from us because they get a good summary of information that they would otherwise receive only after a delay — or perhaps never.”

**The Results Are in**

Today, South County Hospital uses DirectConnect Gateway to send CCDs electronically to primary care physicians of patients who go home, transitions of care providers, nursing homes, and other discharge destinations. According to Gary, one of the most valuable DirectConnect Gateway features, when used in conjunction with the Clinical Document Exchange (CDE) product, is the ability to define trigger events and actions to take when they occur. For example, when a patient is discharged, the event can automatically generate a CCD from the hospital's MEDITECH HIS and send it electronically to a designated transitions of care provider. The directory for managing DirectConnect Gateway addresses is another feature that's highly appreciated.

The features and ease of use paid off during the actual Meaningful Use attestation and continue to provide value in the hospital's daily operations. During the original Meaningful Use Stage 2 reporting period, 36% of all transfers and referrals were supported with the required transition of care document (CCD), sent electronically to other providers' Direct addresses — easily surpassing the 10% required threshold. “That's a very high number in my opinion,” Gary says, adding that the numbers will continue to grow as more hospital partners enroll in Direct. “When they do, it's as simple as adding their Direct address to the directory within DirectConnect Gateway. From that point forward, they will be able to receive CCDs electronically.”

**Specialized Knowledge Came in Handy**

Gary also appreciates the experience and competence that iatricSystems brought to the table in addition to the capabilities of their messaging platform. “There is lots of general information out there, but iatricSystems understood how Direct would work in our MEDITECH environment. The knowledge and education they provided was specific to our requirements, and that adds a lot of value.”

“DirectConnect Gateway is a very fast, easy, and inexpensive way to connect with anybody in the country,” Gary concludes. “All you have to do is give me your Direct email address, and this afternoon I can be sending you CCDs.”

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