

# HealthlinkNY RHIO Improves Clinical Workflows to Accelerate Exchange of Clinical Data



**OBJECTIVE:** HealthlinkNY RHIO (formerly Southern Tier HealthLink NY) needed a project manager with strong healthcare IT experience to manage the numerous IT vendors that provide technology for a health information exchange (HIE) serving about 470,000 residents, five hospitals, and more than 800 physicians. They also needed an integrator and consulting partner to help meet current and future challenges including healthcare reform, Meaningful Use, and proposed policies that could affect the workflows of HealthlinkNY and its stakeholders.

**SITUATION:** HealthlinkNY is a non-profit Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) that manages the HIE for a five-county region in central New York. With aggressive technology implementation and clinical objectives, HealthlinkNY leaders knew they couldn't both steer the RHIO strategically and provide hands-on management of the numerous healthcare IT vendors who implement the technology that underpins HealthlinkNY's long-term success.

**SOLUTION:** HealthlinkNY engaged Accent on Integration® (AOI®) — now part of Iatric Systems — to consolidate all IT vendors by providing project management, vendor management, contract management, and technology oversight. AOI's Professional Services team not only achieved these objectives, but was further engaged to provide technology architecture consulting to HealthlinkNY and maintain an ongoing consulting relationship to help HealthlinkNY navigate challenges like healthcare reform, Meaningful Use, and proposed policies that could affect the workflows of HealthlinkNY and its stakeholders.

**RESULTS:** The Professional Services team helped HealthlinkNY enable successful HIE connections to the hospitals then partnered with HealthlinkNY to expand RHIO participation to long-term care providers, home healthcare providers, and county health departments. Professional Services also managed numerous high-value technology projects for HealthlinkNY, keeping IT vendors on task, on time, and on budget. Examples include clinical document exchange that enables physicians to access HIE data directly from their EMR; a patient engagement initiative that enables patients to access their continuity of care record (CCR) from the HIE via Microsoft® HealthVault,™ and a common viewer that enables providers to view images from disparate PACS systems. Additionally, Professional Services provides ongoing consulting expertise to help HealthlinkNY keep pace with changing requirements and take advantage of new services that benefit both providers and their patients.

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— Christina Galanis  
President and CEO  
HealthlinkNY (formerly  
Southern Tier HealthLink NY)

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"Our challenge was to identify a resource with strong healthcare IT experience, specific technical project management skills and the ability to see the big picture of what we were trying to accomplish," explains HealthlinkNY President and CEO Christina Galanis. "We also wanted a partner with a deep healthcare background to help us navigate healthcare reform, Meaningful Use, and proposed policies that could affect the workflows of HealthlinkNY and its stakeholders."

In considering candidates for the project management role, HealthlinkNY emphasized familiarity with its HIE platform from Healthvision (now Lawson Healthcare, an Infor Affiliate). Through its work on the HIE, leaders at HealthlinkNY had become acquainted with Accent on Integration® (AOI®) — now part of Iatric Systems — which had provided project management and Cloverleaf integration support to Healthvision. As Galanis, Healthvision, and AOI's Professional Services team worked together on the HIE, she realized that the Professional Services team would be an excellent candidate for the HealthlinkNY project management and technical director role.

"Professional Services demonstrated really strong project management practices and skills, which are necessary for a complex project like ours. Their detailed approach to project management not only matched my own, but it's what was required to keep so many vendors on task, on time, and on budget," Galanis adds. "Professional Services also had extensive experience with complex projects in support of vendors like Healthvision, and they have a very deep bench of experienced healthcare IT professionals."

The relationship between HealthlinkNY and Professional Services grew as hospitals connected to the HIE. Professional Services and HealthlinkNY took a much bigger step than many RHIOs by going beyond simple HL7 messaging to exchanging Continuity of Care Records (CCR) and Continuity of Care Documents (CCD) across the RHIO. "What we've seen with HealthlinkNY and Professional Services is a maturing of our HIE and advances that we believe make us very different," Galanis says. "Unlike most HIEs, clinicians don't have to sign in and out of our HIE because patient data is pushed throughout our community, which has encouraged adoption. Professional Services oversaw the clinical document exchange between the HIE and EMRs as an automatic, behind-the-scenes function. We believe this is where Meaningful Use is headed, so we're already ahead of that curve."

Professional Services delivered additional high-value functionality to improve clinical workflow for HealthlinkNY. For example, the team oversaw a project which created a community viewer enabling HealthlinkNY hospitals to easily view radiology images from other providers despite having disparate PACS systems that couldn't otherwise interface. Through their clinical and technology partnership, HealthlinkNY and Professional Services broadened RHIO participation to include long-term care providers, home healthcare providers, and county health departments. Professional Services also oversaw a multi-RHIO exchange project so that disparate RHIO communities can share clinical data.

"Few industries have a more dynamic future than healthcare," Galanis adds. "For HealthlinkNY, it was very valuable to draw on Professional Services' healthcare experience so we can keep pace with change for the benefit of our providers and their patients."

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Iatric Systems recently acquired Accent on Integration® (AOI®), a leading provider of medical device integration solutions. Our combined forces help hospitals integrate medical devices with their EHR faster and cheaper than ever before, and help hospitals tackle complex integration projects that they didn't think were possible.