

Empowering medical staff with quick and easy access to vital information

OpenAthens helps South Australia Health improve information access for clinicians that deliver front-line healthcare services

The challenge

South Australia Health (SA Health) is the public authority responsible for healthcare in the State of South Australia. It serves a population of around 1.6 million people, some of whom are spread across a large area and located in remote places.

Clinicians in hospitals, clinics, or out in the rural community rely on access to medical information to make critical healthcare decisions. A young doctor, for example, about to give antibiotics to a patient at the bedside, needs to know immediately how the drug will react to other drugs the patient is already taking. Equally, researchers need access to a wide range of information in order to carry out vital drug and treatment development.

Mary Peterson, Knowledge Manager for the South Australia Health Library Network, is responsible for ensuring that all 38,000 staff in the SA Health community have access to the information they need, when and where they need it. This information includes decision-making tools like MIMS (Monthly Index of Medical Specialities) a pharmaceutical prescribing reference guide, latest medical innovations, news and a wide range of journals and publications; in total over 50,000 different information resources.

"I responded to a live chat session with an ambulance officer at a patient's house who was using a smartphone to access information about which drugs to administer. Before OpenAthens, this kind of front-line information access was impossible."

Mary Peterson, Knowledge Manager,
South Australia Health Library Network

SA Health was having significant problems making this information available in a fast, reliable and consistent way. Much of it is subscription based and therefore requires a method of managed access, often among thousands of people in multiple healthcare sites across the State of South Australia.

Peterson says, "We were using a series of identification methods such as IDs and passwords or referring URLs which was giving clinicians access to information, but it was unreliable. One of the biggest issues was off-site access. Clinicians were almost screaming to be able to access medical information from home but this wasn't possible for all our resources."

Another challenge was being able to collect data on how individual SA Health organisations, such as a hospital, were using SA Health information resources. Peterson says, "We need to know that the services we are spending money on are actually being used."



The solution

Following a detailed review and analysis of SA Health's situation by Eduserv, SA Health decided to deploy OpenAthens MD (Managed Directory), which enables the organisation to securely and effectively manage users' access to online resources. As it works independently from all existing IT platforms, it requires no additional IT resources, expertise or changes to existing infrastructure.

Eduserv customised OpenAthens to fit with the way SA Health operates so that the system can be managed by a single, overall SA Health administrator, but also by administrators for each of the key agencies within the SA Health Library Network. OpenAthens was supplied to SA Health by EBSCO Information Services, a medical information provider and Eduserv business partner.

"Staff across SA Health really like OpenAthens and the seamless access it gives them.

They love that they only sign on once and it covers all the different resources they need to use, and that they can use so many resources at home that they couldn't before."

Mary Peterson, Knowledge Manager,
South Australia Health Library Network



Results

- Enables any time, any place access to all available information resources.
- Gives each individual user their own ID and password, instead of a universal one, which reduces password sharing and ensures greater security.
- A 30% increase in number and use of journals available off-site.
- Proved so reliable that backup subscriptions for many print journals have been dropped.
- Centralises management of information access across SA Health, while supporting multiple levels and types of access.
- Provides real-time data about how SA Health investment in information resources is being used and by whom.
- Enables detailed statistics on information services to be collected for the whole enterprise and across different locations, departments and user type.

About Eduserv

We're Identity and Access Management specialists who develop and deliver technology services for health, education and the public sector. We are a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity.

"For the South Australia Health Library Network, OpenAthens is absolutely core. It's the way we get our staff in touch with the information resources they need to do their jobs."

Mary Peterson, Knowledge Manager,
South Australia Health Library Network

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