



Case Study

Partners Healthcare

Enterprise Research Infrastructure and Services team (ERIS)

Partners Healthcare turns to ClearSky
Data for an all-in-one storage solution



LOCATIONS

Boston, with 16 hospitals
and affiliates throughout
Massachusetts

EMPLOYEES

74,000 at Partners
Healthcare

DATA FOOTPRINT

One data center housing
+30 terabytes of data,
and growing

SOLUTION

ClearSky Data for file storage,
data encryption, audit logging,
and backup and recovery

RESULTS

Easy compliance with Federal,
state and other institutions'
data security and protection
requirements

Company Overview

Partners HealthCare, the largest healthcare system in Massachusetts, is a not-for-profit that provides patient care, research, teaching, and service both locally and globally. Founded in 1994 by Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, Partners is also a national leader in biomedical research, with several of its hospitals serving as teaching affiliates of Harvard Medical School.

The Enterprise Research & Information Services (ERIS) group within Partners provides the organization's Research and Clinical Innovation communities with technology services and platforms that support their work. ERIS accomplishes its mission with three service-oriented teams that work directly with researchers. These teams provide applications, processes and resources to help advance the research mission across the Partners system.

One of ERIS' primary responsibilities is to ensure compliance with the myriad regulations and requirements governing the security and privacy of patient data, which are very stringent. Patient information is some of the most sensitive data imaginable.

The Challenge

In addition to being strict, healthcare regulations and requirements are continuously changing, which makes compliance a constant effort. To keep up with the latest requirements, ERIS wanted to improve data management in three specific areas:

- » Encryption: For data in transit and at rest
- » Security audit logging: Keeping track of who made changes to each file and when
- » Data protection: Backup and disaster recovery

The highest hurdle ERIS faced was finding a solution that met all these new security requirements, and was also scalable, so it could accommodate data growth.

"Federal regulations, state laws and requirements from our collaborating and contracting institutions have made compliance, auditing and security increasingly more complex and cumbersome," Richter said. "What's more, the amount of data under management continues to grow exponentially. We needed a storage system that could meet a higher level of security stringency, while also giving us room to grow."

Beyond that primary challenge, the ERIS team also needed to be able to accurately manage its chargeback process, which is how the organization bills different business units based on capacity usage.

The Solution

ERIS was seeking a solution to meet all its difficult, diverse challenges. ClearSky was the only vendor that met all of ERIS' varied requirements, including audit logging and data encryption both in transit and at rest. The fact that automatic backup and disaster recovery were built in to the ClearSky service at no added expense was also a big factor in ERIS' decision. With annual retention policies included as a default and endless customization options for different regulations and data that may arise, ERIS and its customers are protected against outages and losing data.

"Our researchers got the privacy, protection and security they needed," Richter said. "And we also now have a much more flexible, agile and regulatory-compliant data storage infrastructure with very good performance."

ERIS now employs ClearSky Data to bring user-based authentication to all its NFS file servers. It manages and secures the organization's heavy NFS workloads, while providing active directory (AD) authentication for all its Linux, Unix and Mac clients. Additionally, ClearSky is integrated with Splunk and ERIS' antivirus infrastructure.

ClearSky has also improved ERIS' chargeback processes significantly. The organization can now manage the various Partners' business units it serves through the same interface, acting much like a managed services provider (MSP).

The Outlook

Many of Partners' departments have contracts that stipulate a high base level for security and compliance. With ClearSky, ERIS' internal customers can now rest assured that they are compliant with all the many privacy, protection and security requirements they need to meet. It's a huge time savings, because they no longer need to spend a month auditing their systems to comply with an external auditor.

"With ClearSky, the data our researchers need is highly accessible," Richter said. "It's where it needs to be at the right time, which eases the process of accessing and using the data. And we've had no issues with latency. We still have some storage that we manage on-prem, and our teams cannot detect any difference in system performance while accessing data that we manage ourselves versus the data managed by ClearSky. That's a huge benefit."

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The ERIS group relies on ClearSky to protect, secure, store and provide access to our data. As a result, our team members can focus on data projects that can make a valuable difference to Partners' mission instead solving storage issues.

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Brent Richter,
Enterprise Director of Partners Healthcare's
Enterprise Research Infrastructure & Services

**Contact us to learn more about how
ClearSky Data helps healthcare organizations
meet regulations and exceed expectations.**

clearskydata.com/contact-us