User-Friendly Work Stations

Tools4ever ties single sign-on to EMR systems

By LYNNE JETER

Work station computers in hospitals and healthcare settings are used by many members of the healthcare provider team throughout the day for multiple reasons, meaning that restricted information may be viewed by unauthorized individuals if accounts aren't securely managed.

Scott Wood, vice president and CIO for Tampa-based Opis Management Resources, has found a solution to the potential security leak problem via Tools4ever, a global leader in single sign-on technology serving the healthcare industry for two decades.

"We've used Tools4ever for about a year now, the user management resource piece and self-service password piece," said Wood, who handles IT for approximately 2,500 medical employees, from physicians to certified nurse assistants to administrators. "We're implementing the single sign-on piece next because we wanted to do it in phases."

Originally, Wood acquired the technology to tie the payroll system to the network to make the new recruit process more efficient.

"On the day they're hired, especially for the clinical or nursing side, new employees get their log-on information," he said. "The user management resource piece gives them the capability to immediately start documenting patient care."

Wood pointed out why the single sign-on piece is highly relevant: With
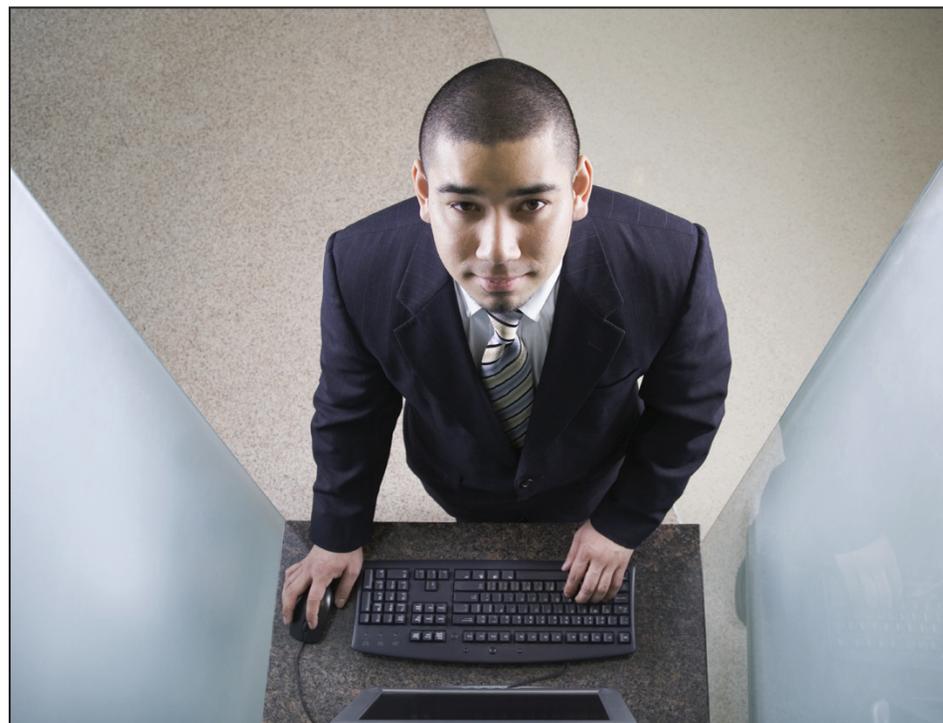
the average hospital nursing post computer used by dozens of people hourly, even with strict security requirements in place, employees are forced to login into the computer each time they need to access information. The time-consuming task, often necessitated by a stressful situation, requires initiating an application, performing tasks, and then logging out when completed.

A recent Tools4ever survey revealed the extent the time-consuming and far from user-friendly practice has on the manual entry of credentials. It also showed how users manage their user names and passwords with unsafe techniques, such as having weak passwords or scribbling passwords on a sticky note or slip of paper tucked under

their keyboards; and how helpdesks that frequently field calls from users who have forgotten their passwords tap into this common problem as a way to elevate support costs.

Tools4ever's Enterprise Single Sign On Manager (E-SSOM) allows users to easily enter credentials for more than a dozen applications, and will tie the tools product to EMR systems, eliminating the need for multiple sign-ins.

With E-SSOM, users have quick access to their applications by circumventing the slow login process of Windows-based systems. The program simply "unlocks" a user's authorized workstation and all applications are started automatically. The single sign on feature takes over the user's login pro-

cess so the user isn't forced to enter a new username/password combination for each application he wants to open.

E-SSOM also allows smart card capability, further simplifying the sign-on process, a major benefit in the deadline-driven world of healthcare. Once a user scans the smartcard for the reader and enters a PIN code, the user's profile is automatically logged in and the right applications launched without having to do anything more.

"From an IT support side, it's helped phenomenally, especially because there are only three of us at Opis," said Wood. "With Tools4ever's self-service department, employees can reset their password instead of calling the support line and waiting to get it reset."

Opis Management Resources clients include managed skilled nursing facilities in Eustis, Jacksonville, Lakeland, Largo, Longwood, Ormond Beach, Tampa and West Melbourne.

The Opis family of companies includes Alpha Physician Services, a medical group practice established in 2003; SigmaLink Rehab Services, an in-house provider of interdisciplinary therapies; and Advanced Pharmacy, a fully automated onsite pharmacy. Opis is the first company in Florida to use an automated pharmacological management system.