How Illinois Bone and Joint Institute Supercharged Efficiency and Growth with Meriplex

ILLINOIS BONE & JOINT INSTITUTE®

Move better. Live better.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

CHALLENGES

- Network latency and disruptions impacting patient care

- Existing security provider was not scaling with the practice's growth, potentially causing vulnerabilities

RESULTS

- Optimized bandwidth reduced network slowdowns and boosted staff's productivity

- Network redundancy eliminated outages, further enhancing operational efficiency

- A cloud environment facilitated a flexible infrastructure, allowing the practice to continue expanding sustainably

- Data loss prevention ensured sensitive data was always secure and recoverable

PARTNER

MERIPLEX

Illinois Bone and Joint Institute (IBJI) is a multidisciplinary Orthopedic group serving Greater Chicago. Founded in 1990, IBJI has since grown to become the largest Orthopedic Practice in Illinois, offering patient care with over 50 locations and 150 physicians.

The practice leverages its size and a cross-functional group of providers to treat muscle, bone, and joint injuries as well as chronic conditions like arthritis and osteoporosis. IBJI's convenient locations and collaborative, multidisciplinary service are testaments to its mission: to provide patient-centric care.

For Chief Technology Officer, Matt Fletcher, a cornerstone of that patient-centric care is the practice's information technology. "I'm responsible for using our IT as a part of our strategy to provide the best experience for our patients and providers," said Fletcher. In IBJI's case, that includes their PHI storage and privacy and their interconnected network.

Fletcher has been with the company for nearly 20 years and has been a part of its explosive growth. "We've grown a lot over the last three to five years," he said. "We're seeing a lot of mergers and acquisitions and a lot of system changes so we have to continuously be ahead of the game with our IT."

However, no organization can undergo such ambitious expansion without risking growing pains.

Growing Pains: Security, Connectivity, and Scalability

As IBJI grew, it began to expand beyond its technology infrastructure. One area where Fletcher noticed a negative impact of this growth was in the practice's network, which supported their increasing number of locations. He knew a strained network in this day and age would have serious implications, especially in a healthcare practice.

He was concerned these network conditions would risk staff having to work, communicate, and share patient data over a connection that was spotty, prone to disruptions, and ultimately detrimental to patient care.

IBJI was outgrowing its managed IT provider as well. Fletcher noticed the signs leading up to a routine Security Risk Assessment (SRA). "We were planning an SRA and started to have some service issues with our IT vendor. It was nothing major but enough to make me curious about other companies that do managed IT."

Fletcher needed a new kind of information technology provider—one that could equip IBJI with future-proof networking and cybersecurity technology and grow alongside them as a long-term partner.

"We have needed a more mature, specialized IT co-management relationship," said Fletcher. "We've been pushed to go out and find a vendor who can grow with us at IBJI."

Optimizing Connectivity and Security

Fletcher contacted Meriplex for guidance on IBJI's infrastructure challenges and potential strategies. This began with a Security Risk Assessment. "It was a natural fit to get a sense of how working with our IT would be," he said. "The team came in, did a professional job, and gave very human feedback on what they saw. You can tell they are very competent in their field."

Following the SRA, as well as a closer evaluation of IBJI's networking challenges, the Meriplex team worked with Fletcher to lay out a roadmap to enhance the practice's infrastructure and cybersecurity. "We sat down and had a meeting about risks uncovered," he recalled. "They put everything into categories, high and low priority, and provided us with a detailed analysis and plan to work through."

An important part of this roadmap was a fully managed Software-Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN). This technology would work with the practice's existing network to manage and prioritize data traffic securely across its numerous locations—offering a more reliable, cost-effective, and protected connection for providers and staff to share sensitive patient data.

Defining features of the technologies deployed would include:

Bandwidth optimization to streamline data flow and reduce bottlenecks
Network redundancy to ensure a constant connection
Migration of applications and data to an Azure Cloud environment
Data loss prevention to prevent unauthorized access or leakage of sensitive data
24/7 support and full management by Meriplex

Once armed with these networking and security solutions, Fletcher and IBJI saw a dramatic improvement in not only their technology but also their day-to-day operations and patient care.

A Future-Proof Network and a Long-Term Partnership

What began with taking on a new technology partner and implementing a security and networking solution has become a complete, end-to-end transformation for IBJI. Once deployed, the practice's new Managed SD-WAN solution yielded impactful benefits:

- Optimized bandwidth reduced network slowdowns and boosted staff's productivity
- Network redundancy eliminated outages, further enhancing operational efficiency
- A cloud environment facilitated a flexible infrastructure, allowing the practice to continue expanding sustainably and with full scalability
- Data loss prevention ensured sensitive data was always secure and recoverable
- 24/7 support and management enabled Fletcher's in-house team to focus on patient-centric tasks while IBJI's cybersecurity and network were handled by a dedicated team of experts

Fewer network bottlenecks and outages directly resulted in an improved patient and employee experience. IBJI also benefited from enhanced protection of its applications and patient data, further improving patient experience and ensuring compliance with HIPAA.

"We have internal staff to handle our day-in, day-out clinical IT, but we can rely on Meriplex for best-of-class networking and security to make sure IBJI is running the best it can at any time."

Matt Fletcher
CTO, IBJI

The greatest benefits for IBJI, however, lay ahead. While the limited resources of their network and managed IT provider were previously holding them back, the future-proof solutions implemented by Meriplex now not only meet their current needs but are also scalable, adaptable, and cost- effective—laying a foundation for long-term growth.

For Fletcher, with a long-term solution came a long-term partner. "We have internal staff to handle our day-in, day-out clinical IT, but we can rely on Meriplex for best-of-class networking and security to make sure IBJI is running the best it can at any time," he said when describing IBJI's relationship with Meriplex.

Now confident that the practice's security, network, and information technology are in capable hands—with 24/7 monitoring and support—Fletcher's internal staff can focus their talents on delivering exceptional, patient-centric care.