From the Albany Business Review:

'A tremendous difference': Health data through HIXNY allowed quicker pandemic response

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When the Covid-19 pandemic hit and hospitals in upstate New York were trying to predict what would happen, they were able to do so in part because of their connection with health information network HIXNY.

The nonprofit electronic health information network headquartered in Colonie acts as a conduit of clinical data, allowing providers and health plans from different systems to share that data between one another as necessary. Using data about which patients in which areas were contracting the virus helped the state and hospitals respond more quickly.

“It gives them great insight through this network of real-time clinical information that they didn't otherwise have,” said Mark McKinney, HIXNY CEO.

HIXNY operates in nearly 30 New York counties, as well as some western Vermont counties, from the Capital Region to the Canadian border. Within that region, every hospital and about 70% of providers are connected to the platform.

How has the pandemic affected HINXY’s role in New York health care? The pandemic was a pretty major seismic shift in a lot of ways. As the pandemic ramped up, we saw a substantial increase in the use of HIXNY for public health purposes. In addition to just the typical things that we were doing with health care providers, having to now work with the pandemic and the public health agencies really stretched our work effort quite a bit.

New York has always funded, in part, the cost of this network primarily because they saw the value of it for public health. In pre-pandemic days, making that investment was obviously something that was important, but they were kind of betting on the future. The pandemic really showed that forethought and foresight, because now that network is here and it's available and it's really made a tremendous difference. I think some part of the response New York has had to the
pandemic can be attributed to the fact that this network is in place and that information is available to be able to understand what's happening in various ways.

**Why has it been so valuable during the pandemic?** As part of the pandemic, the state did begin to contribute some data to our network that it did not previously share in the form of some Covid laboratory results. And so that information then informed providers and payers about the status of patient conditions. What the state was trying to understand initially was what characteristics Covid patients have that might explain why some were in the hospital for a short time versus long term. And if you think about in the early days of the pandemic, we were trying to figure out how many beds we were going to need, how many ventilators, and all of that information. New York could also see what the situation looks like, whether it was growing in one area or another. All that information was valuable to them as they tried to predict what the pandemic would look like.

**What are your future goals for HIXNY?** Our key goals are really to make sure that an increasing percentage of providers use the information available in HIXNY. We know that that information lowers the cost of care and improves the efficiency of providers because they can get access to information in real time, as opposed to having to call and wait for it to be sent over. And a lot of times, it prevents repeat testing.

We're also focused on trying to make sure patients have access to the same information that their physicians do. We're in the process of connecting to some large, well-known systems that will enable the patient to extract their data and put it directly onto their phone.

*Interview has been edited and condensed.*

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