

## U.S. Health Departments Using Orion Health Technology for Disease Tracking

By [Calvin Azuri](#), TMCnet Contributor

More than 45 health departments in the U.S. use technology from reputed software developer [Orion Health](#) to identify at an early stage, and react quickly to, contagious and potentially hazardous diseases and other public health exigencies.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other central authorities are now persuading more and more state health agencies to enhance their crisis management, response and health monitoring mechanisms to give access to vital information in an emergency reaction or in analyzing any spikes in health issues.

Orion's ready to use software, the Rhapsody Integration Engine, available on counters of most software stores, has been instrumental in easing off some of the burden from the shoulders of healthcare enterprises by enabling a smooth framework for making sense of hundreds and thousands of bits of medical information.

The software helps compile medical data about a broad range of medical conditions, including recent outbreaks like the swine flu, from a wide cross-section of patients on a daily basis. The collection process, often carried out by several scattered healthcare organizations from unorganized sources, is streamlined to a precise and quicker one by Rhapsody. Rhapsody processes thousands of feeds from these organizations everyday and then it safely provides the data to public health decision makers using their PHINMS (Public Health Information Messaging Service).

Employees of the state agencies can mechanically enter patient health and disease statistics into the CDC's national disease monitoring mechanism, which automatically generated reports and gives health officers at multi levels, the local, regional and national, important information which can prove invaluable in a time of medical crisis.

Rhapsody has also found acceptance as a key element of the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) in 27 states. The NEDSS is a CDC strategy that enhances the use of data and information framework norms to evolve the use of effective, integrated and inter-functional monitoring systems at local, regional and national levels and is a vital part of the Public Health Information Network.

Orion Health CEO Ian McCrae said in a release, "Rhapsody is providing the mechanism for state departments of health to collect data from medical laboratories state-wide and share data to support the nation's public health needs and for early detection and rapid response to potentially catastrophic infectious disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies such as the swine flu and avian influenza."

Previously, this level of collaborative information exchange was not viable because the prevailing techniques were too cumbersome and expensive. The accuracy and punctuality of data reporting was also a major concern especially in the case of biological warfare and epidemics. Rhapsody has addressed most of these concerns by getting data from almost any viable data resource, format it appropriately and to enter it into the central system has made it very popular with the healthcare sector.

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