



## Cloud-based efforts 'front-and-center' in healthcare

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By Dan Bowman

Earlier this month, AT&T announced it was [partnering with Minnesota-based medical imaging software solutions provider Acuo Technologies](#) in an effort to develop vendor-neutral, cloud-based medical imaging storage solutions for healthcare providers and suppliers. *FierceMobileHealthcare* caught up with assistant vice president of AT&T ForHealth Solutions Randall Porter (pictured) to learn more about the alliance, and to chat about the current state of mHealth with regard to imaging and the cloud. Porter's colleague Eleanor Chye, executive director of mobility healthcare and pharma with AT&T Business Solutions, will be a speaker at *FierceHealthIT's* [executive breakfast at HIMSS11 on Tuesday, Feb. 22](#) at 7 a.m., at the Wyndham Orlando Resort.

### **FMHC: How important do you think cloud-based efforts are becoming in mHealth?**

**Porter:** Our customers are telling us that they're very interested in this. We have a healthcare executive advisory council made up of about 20 of the top CIOs from some of the largest regional and national provider systems in the U.S., so we're constantly testing what's at the top of their list and why. As we were building this service, it was front-and-center to them. They actually helped us shape what that offer should look like, how it would fit into the context of the way they would be utilizing their images from a work flow standpoint. The storage--really comparing it to the onsite specific PAC solutions that exist today...they are very interested.

Ultimately, they want to provide better care. Having the image in the cloud makes it available to multiple providers and caregivers, clinicians, etc. And along with being able to have line of site to what the cost is going to be based on, that pay-as-you-go model is really what the cloud service is all about.

### **FMHC: Talk a little bit about AT&T's efforts with Acuo.**

**Porter:** What we're doing there is providing a vendor neutral cloud based storage option for providers and big imaging centers and imaging companies. Just think about the explosive growth of imaging both from an EMR adoption standpoint and the move to electronic images PACS (picture archiving and communications systems) systems and also the aging population--the images that are going to be needed to account for that. I think the latest forecast was around 1 billion images would be taken next year.

Providers, hospitals, our customers, etc., are looking for a vendor neutral way to store those [images] in the cloud, giving them greater flexibility both from a pricing and cost standpoint, as well as an infrastructure standpoint. The announcement with Acuo is really all about providing that middleware component that we will put on top of our synaptic storage platform, which is based on the EMC storage platform, to now be able to deliver all of the dynamic tag morphing that's needed to exchange the information between PACS systems. The Acuo middleware also gives us the clinical information life cycle management methodology....So Acuo is an important piece of that middleware that now adds on top to our synaptic storage platforms deliver that cloud-based storage service.

### **FMHC: What are your thoughts on the FDA's recent approvals of the Mobile MIM app and Mobisante's ultrasound device and what they mean for the future of mobile imaging?**

**Porter:** We think it's great. Now that the FDA is starting to approve several [technologies], not only within the imaging space, but if you think about the partnership that we did with WellDoc around their diabetes management solution and application--that one actually had FDA clearance, as well--if we think about the opportunity that's out there from both an mHealth standpoint, an imaging and storage standpoint, in order for these technologies to really begin to take root, we've got to have FDA approval around that.

**FMHC: There's not a whole lot of legislation around mHealth as of yet. How do you feel about the push for electronic health records and Meaningful Use, and the lack of a similar legislative push for mHealth?**

**Porter:** mHealth's going to be just as important, if not more, if you look at how penetrative mobile is and how that type of consumer driven device can really help proliferate all these technologies and applications that we're talking about. We've actually now gotten involved with the [mHealth Regulatory Coalition](#) with the FDA, so they're starting to look at that heavily, as well.

Essentially, we provide insight from an AT&T standpoint on the technologies that are driving the market, the applications the growth, how they're connected into our plans from a networking and a healthcare standpoint.

**FMHC: What do you think the FDA's announcement that it will try to speed up the process of approving medical devices means for mHealth?**

**Porter:** I think it's along the same lines as what we were just talking about. If you look at just the development in the past four months of all these applications and devices from MedApps, to eCardio to WellDoc to the imaging solution that we were talking about, it's just a recognition that we're going to have to be faster in order to enable those devices and applications getting approved. All of that helps to get them to market quicker, which helps them impact the things in the system that improve the quality of care and ultimately take costs out of our system.

*This interview has been condensed and edited.*