PINNACLEHEALTH SYSTEM

THE CHALLENGE

PinnacleHealth System wanted to change their bed management and patient discharge processes to increase staff efficiency and improve the patient experience. They also sought to increase staff communications for patients on ventilators, particularly when they experienced respiratory distress and required fast clinician response. The challenge was to coordinate all of these communications and integrate the chosen solution with the technology already in place.

THE SOLUTION

PinnacleHealth evaluated several vendors and decided to work with Spok due to its experience in helping hospital staff improve productivity and communications through mobile alerting. Spok's HIPAA-compliant, FDA 510(K)-cleared clinical alerting software, Spok Messenger, now receives messages from ventilators and the bed management system and pushes alerts out to the right person's mobile device. This spans nurses, transport personnel, housekeeping, and more. PinnacleHealth uses a single Spok Messenger system to support both hospitals, and plans to add the capabilities at the West Shore facility when it opens.

Additional benefits of using Spok are the ease of adding new systems and expanding the service to additional locations and devices. Initially used for respiratory alarms and bed management, a new Orthopedics floor at Harrisburg Hospital is using Spok Messenger to incorporate patient monitoring and nurse call with a patient room and bed management system. Secure text alerts are sent to staff phones when a patient pushes the nurse call button, requests medication, or needs assistance getting up. Future automated alerts will include bed-specific information: if a fall-risk patient tries to climb out of bed without assistance, a bed brake is not on, or if the bed is not lowered to the proper position.

OVERVIEW

Located in Harrisburg, Pa., PinnacleHealth System has been dedicated to the health and wellness of the people in its community since 1873. The main facility, 400-bed Harrisburg Hospital, provides services from prenatal care to open heart surgeries. Also part of the system are Community General Osteopathic Hospital (CGOH) and West Shore Hospital (which is under construction and expected to open in 2014).

PinnacleHealth has received Joint Commission Gold Status for its diabetes program, was voted one of the Best Places to work in Pennsylvania from 2002-2010, and is a 2012 Hospitals & Health Networks® Most Wired hospital. PinnacleHealth System nurses have also twice received the Magnet award from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Channel alerts and alarms from patient care systems to staff on mobile devices
- Improve communications among staff to coordinate patient bed management and transport
- Reduce noise that is disruptive to patient recovery

SOLUTION

Spok® Messenger Clinical Alerting

RESULTS

- Improved patient experience: quicker response to nurse call and a faster discharge process
- A quieter hospital: 1,400 messages sent per day, reducing hallway conversations and overhead announcements
- Increased efficiency and accuracy of messages

The emergency department (ED) recently implemented a new system to monitor the number of patients waiting to be treated. When there are more than 19 patients waiting at Harrisburg Hospital, or eight at the Community General Osteopathic Hospital (CGOH), the monitoring system tells Spok. Spok then sends secure text alerts directly to relevant staff on their phones letting them know they are needed in the ED to help address the patient volume.

THE RESULTS

"When we have a bed change, the discharged patient needs to be transported, and the room needs to be cleaned before a new patient can be brought in," said Chris Hunsinger, Telecommunications Technician for PinnacleHealth System. "There's a whole team involved, and it's a coordinated effort. [Spok] Messenger sends messages to Wi-Fi phones and/or pagers and has made the process much smoother."

Spok's clinical alerting solution is also helping reduce sounds in the facility. "We used to use phones to call and ask for beds to be moved. When a text is sent there's not the noise of someone talking on the phone and walking down the hall. It's an efficient method that is also more discreet," Hunsinger said.

In addition to reducing conversation, implementing the new staff workflow has also shortened some alarms. When ventilators on the respiratory floor at the Harrisburg campus sound alerts, texts are sent directly to staff on their phones. Staff respond quickly to check patients, also silencing the alarm sooner than before. Having the ability to send alerts directly to staff is a gentler, quieter way to manage patient care. "We're a quiet hospital, so we don't make overhead announcements or use alarms unnecessarily if messages can be pushed through like this," Hunsinger said. "We're very focused on the patient experience."

Sending messages to staff is not only less disruptive and more efficient, it is also more accurate. "When texts are sent, no translation is needed, and there's no paper," Hunsinger pointed out. "Staff look right at the information and know what it is. It's also very fast—just the push of a button."

And what do staff think of Spok's communication solution? "The only people who know about it are the ones behind the scenes. The purpose of the software is to be seamless. The staff using it on a day-to-day basis don't need to think about it. They are just able to respond quickly to our patients using mobile communications."

THE FUTURE

PinnacleHealth is using 800 staff handsets between the Harrisburg and CGOH campuses, and more will be added when the West Shore Hospital opens in 2014. "During our deployment at the West Shore Hospital, we might use different types of phones, so we need the versatility [Spok] Messenger offers," Hunsinger said.

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