CLINICAL STAFF IMPROVE WORKFLOW AND REDUCE PATIENT CALL RESPONSE TIMES

Introduction

Like many Chief Nursing Officers, Danielle Navarro is all too familiar with the challenges of stretching resources in the delivery of exceptional patient care. Navarro is the CNO of Guthrie County Hospital, a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital in one of Iowa's most underserved regions. Located 30 miles from Des Moines, Guthrie County Hospital must balance a lean budget while offering an expansive range of services to meet the varying needs of the local community. With enhanced communications tools and workflow solutions through the Ascom Telligence nurse call system, clinical staff are improving efficiencies and measuring positive results.

Solution Delivery

Guthrie County Hospital selected Ascom Telligence nurse call and wireless handsets to improve clarity and efficiency of patient-to-staff and staff-to-staff communications. The nurse call solution was integrated with Ascom wireless handsets to enable care givers to assist patients more effectively and reduce delays in information exchange.

Communications Engineering Company, an Ascom partner based in Hiawatha, Iowa, worked closely with the staff at Guthrie County Hospital to configure the nurse call system and wireless handsets to support patient care and quality initiatives. At the beginning of each shift, the Unit Secretary assigns the wireless handsets and enters staff room assignments into the software component. With the goal to improve responses to patients' needs, the clinicians decided that when a patient presses the call button, the call should ring directly to the Certified Nursing Assistant's (CNA) wireless handset.

If the CNA does not respond in a preset amount of time by answering the call or going to the patient's bedside, the call escalates to the assigned Registered Nurse (RN). If the RN is unavailable, the call escalates again and rings to the House Supervisor. As part of the strategy to improve workflow efficiency, Guthrie County Hospital utilizes workflow functions to automate steps in routine processes, signal staff presence and alert each other of needs.

''We are always looking for ways to streamline efficiencies. Having the right support tools is crucial to efficiently managing our workflow.''

— Danielle Navarro, RN, Chief Nursing Officer

Each peripheral station includes a button for the primary nurse, one for the nurse assistant and one for housekeeping. The RN and CNA buttons signal when a particular staff member is present in the room, eliminating the necessity to notify the Unit Secretary each time a care giver is in a patient room. As the appropriate button is pushed, whether it is the nurse or assistant, a light illuminates in the hall and an icon populates on the user interface. The clinician is easily located and can be called directly, saving time and enhancing care delivery.

Similarly, when the housekeeping button is pushed, the corresponding light is illuminated in the hallway and a message is sent to the housekeeping staff member's wireless handset indicating a need. With the reporting component, the Telligence nurse call system delivers immediate access to patient call statistics and response times to support quality and process improvement opportunities.

''Once we integrated the nurse call and wireless phone solution into our care plan, our target was to respond to every patient call within seven minutes,'' says Navarro. ''We could hear the patients clearly, easily connect with staff on the floor and speed service delivery. We dropped our target response time to five minutes and we're still meeting it 99% of the time.''

– Danielle Navarro, RN, Chief Nursing Officer

	Q2 2012
	Q1 2012
	Q4 2011
	Q3 2011
	Q2 2011
	Q1 2011

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
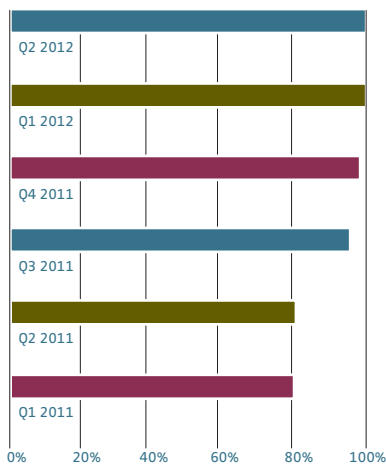
Average inpatient satisfaction scores 2011-12. Ascom Telligence nurse call and wireless handsets implemented mid-Q3 2011.

Results

Since the implementation of the Ascom Telligence nurse call and wireless handset solution, the overall quality of communications has improved dramatically, enabling care givers to respond faster to patient needs. Calls are answered from almost any location without staff returning to the nurses' station.

''The phones also enhance communication within our organization,'' says Navarro. ''Staff can call for a consult or additional assistance without leaving the patient's bedside. And we've reduced the number of overhead pages for a quieter environment for patients.''

With a Critical Access designation, Guthrie staff must often accomplish more with fewer resources, forcing everyone to wear many hats to get the job done.

Streamlining workflow enables staff to manage patient throughput more efficiently, equating to smarter allocation of staff and resources. With the integration of reporting features, nursing leadership and staff seamlessly access documentation to assess call response times, evaluate staff efficiencies and adjust accordingly. This timely data enhances care delivery and lends support to quality and safety initiatives and patient satisfaction.

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