



St. Joseph Mercy Oakland nurses save time, save steps and respond to patients more quickly.

The Cardiac Unit at St. Joseph Mercy Oakland is always buzzing. It serves patients who have had or are in danger of having a heart attack or suffer from unstable angina or irregular heartbeat. Nurses administer medications, draw blood, perform EKGs and keep tabs on telemetry monitors to track patients' heart rhythms.

This 443-bed comprehensive, community teaching hospital in Pontiac, Michigan, is part of the CHE Trinity Health System and has been serving the local community for more than 85 years. The hospital and staff have earned a national reputation as leaders not only in Cardiology, but also Critical Care, Women's Health, Orthopedics, Oncology, Radiology, Pain and Palliative Care, Patient Safety and Quality Care.

THE CHALLENGE

While providing the best possible care to their patients, St. Joe's nurses had been struggling with cumbersome legacy phones. Daily workflow was disrupted by "broken-loop" communication: missed calls, call-backs, and checking phone extensions that changed for each nurse with every shift. The phones couldn't differentiate critical telemetry alarms from less urgent issues, making communication even more challenging. The resulting alarm fatigue and the difficulty locating other nurses and ancillary departments were having a negative effect on the staff.

"Voalte One allows us to receive alerts from the patient call light system and telemetry. It is easy to read, and we're able to send alerts to ourselves."

-Anita Barksdale, RN, BSN, Clinical Nurse Educator

PROFILE

- 443-bed comprehensive, community teaching hospital
- Ministry Organization of CHE Trinity Health System
- 2013, 2012, 2011 Leapfrog Group Top Hospital and twice awarded an "A" grade for patient safety and quality

UNIT SERVED

- Cardiac Unit

TECHNOLOGY IMPACT

- Ability to differentiate between tones for telemetry alarms
- Nurse call messages sent directly to Voalte smartphones, with ability to call back to the patient in the room
- Streamlined communication

INTEGRATIONS



VOALTE IMPACT

Initially, the hospital installed Voalte® smartphones on its 30-bed Cardiac Unit to replace legacy phones as a secondary alarm function for the telemetry monitors.

The legacy phones could not vary ringtones to differentiate critical alarms from others, leading to alarm fatigue and inefficient workflows. With traditional nurse call, when a nurse received a call alarm, the call was answered by a Health Unit Coordinator who would triage the request and then reach the nurse or nurse assistant. With Voalte One™, the call is routed directly to the appropriate care team member. The patient and nurse may directly engage in a voice communication, if necessary.

When patients needed a nurse, they pushed a call button that routed an alert through the Unit Secretary, who then called the nurse's legacy phone. The nurse would be interrupted from her current task and would have to call back to the Unit Secretary or walk to the patient's room to ask what was needed. Now nurses get the calls directly to their Voalte smartphones, eliminating the need to go through the Unit Secretary.

With Voalte One, nurses now receive a range of alerts and alarms that vary by ringtone according to urgency. In addition to high-priority cardiac arrhythmia telemetry alarms, nurses also can receive lower-priority alarms and patient calls directly on their smartphones. When a patient pushes the nurse call button, the nurse receives the call and can accept, decline, or accept and call back. The call-back function enables the nurse to call the pillow speaker and ask what the patient needs.

The positive impact on workflow was immediate: The nurse no longer has to drop what he or she is doing for every alert, but can prioritize based on information received in real time. When a patient requests water or ice, the nurse can let the patient know when he or she will be there, finish the task he or she is working on and then proceed to the patient's room with the water. The nurse saves time, saves steps, and responds to patients more quickly and appropriately, for a better overall patient experience.

According to St. Joe's Vice President of Quality and Safety and Chief Medical Information Officer Fabian Fregoli, MD, the Voalte smartphones increase efficiencies and lead to better care.

"The Voalte smartphones have improved efficiency between the patient and members of the care team," he says. "They offer direct, effective communication between care team members through the use of voice and text messaging. Alerts and alarms are routed to the appropriate care team member."

Dr. Fregoli adds that the Voalte smartphones improve patient safety because "alerts and alarms from various systems are routed directly to the nurses' iPhones. They also offer the patient seamless monitoring of care and communication."

Overall, the implementation of Voalte One improves communication and efficiencies, and saves steps. With the old legacy phones, nurses could send and receive text messages, but the process was cumbersome, and messages were difficult to navigate. Texting with Voalte One, nurses now have a quick, efficient way to exchange information and track every conversational thread. Clearly, St. Joe's nurses are transitioning easily to text as a primary means of communication, sending 4,768 texts in the first month after Voalte One implementation.

EXPANSION

As a result of the success of the Voalte One rollout, the hospital is expanding its smartphone implementation to two 30-bed medical-surgical units, as well as throughout the new eight-story, 208-bed South Patient Tower, scheduled to open in spring 2014, and to all other nursing units in the hospital.

"The use of Voalte smartphones has allowed for the elimination of overhead paging on the nursing unit, which makes for a much quieter environment for our guests."

*–Suzanne Livesey, RN, BSN
Clinical Liaison-Nursing, Genesis Education Specialist,
Clinical Informatics Department*