

Valley Health – Winchester Medical Center

Using Automation to Improve Patient Care by Monitoring Pain Pathways

Valley Health is a not-for-profit organization serving the healthcare needs of residents in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Valley Health provides outstanding care to their patients through a system of six hospitals and related facilities, offering patients convenient care that is close to home. One of the Valley Health locations is Winchester Medical Center, a 411-bed Level II Trauma Center located in Winchester, Virginia. Winchester Medical Center is a resource for 400,000 residents, offering diagnostic, medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care, along with advanced critical care services in heart, neurosurgery, oncology, trauma and neonatal care.

A Unique Approach

Helping patients manage their pain is important to every healthcare facility. Being able to monitor and record each patient's pain level on an ongoing basis can be challenging, as it takes a large amount of a nurse's time.

According to Lorraine Leake, Director of the Transfer Center and Communications at Valley Health, the ongoing charting "takes away time from the patient, so anything we can do to help the nurse, so they are doing more bedside. That is our goal."

Integrating Two Systems

Lorraine looked at the various systems available in their facil-

ity, trying to find a way to make it easier for the nurses to monitor pain levels. Knowing that they had the 1Call *Infinity*, a call center system that streamlines enterprise-wide communications by providing patient room information and on-call scheduling information, along with the GetWellNetwork, which allows patients to enter their pain level with a remote control, Lorraine began working on a plan to get the two systems to work together.

that patient's room, and pages the appropriate nurse with the result.

Impressive Results

This unique integration was implemented in November 2009. "It is used in every inpatient area, except for the critical care area. It is on 335 beds out of our 411," Lorraine stated.

Early results showed a 48% average response rate from patients.

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Lorraine presented her ideas on merging the data in these systems to both 1Call and GetWellNetwork. The two companies then worked together to integrate the two systems.

How the Pain Pathway Process Works

To start the pain pathway process, a nurse scans a medication given to a patient. Fifty minutes later, the patient is asked, using the GetWellNetwork on their television, to rate their current pain level on a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high). The result is sent through the GetWellNetwork to 1Call's On-Call Scheduling module, which keeps track of the nurse responsible for

A time study revealed that checking on a patient takes a nurse 9 minutes. Susan Clark, RN Clinical Manager for the Float Pool at Valley Health, commented, "For a pain scale of 0 to 3, when the nurse doesn't have to do anything since the patient's pain is being controlled, it saved 69,066 minutes in a two-month period, which turns out to be 1,151 hours. For a pain scale rating from 4 to 10, where the nurse would have to do something, it saved 74,988 minutes; basically 1,249 hours within a two-month period."

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Meeting Joint Commission Standards

During a recent visit, the Joint Commission staff was impressed with how the pain pathway was set up at Valley Health.

Joint Commission would like all healthcare facilities to have 100% documentation of pain scores. Valley Health's scores were "originally around 59%, and went up to 89% in documentation with the pain pathway. The scores have gone up to 92% with this system in place," according to Lorraine.

Valley Health quickly found out what an effective process this was. When the schedules for the nurses covering the patient rooms weren't copied by several departments, the scores went down, giving them a way to prove that the pain pathway process is working.

Benefits of the Integration

Even though the process is automated, Valley Health still knows when something isn't functioning exactly as they would expect it to. If a patient doesn't respond to the GetWellNetwork pain level request, perhaps because their television is off, or the patient was asleep, the nurse receives a page that the patient did not respond so the nurse can go check up on that patient.

Although there were mixed reactions to this new process among the nurses, with some of them loving it, and some not liking the

many pages that they receive, the benefits for the nurses make it a very worthwhile process. "They don't have to go to the patient's room, then get the medications, and then go back again. They are there one time, and that saves them a lot of steps," said Lorraine.

Fine-Tuning the Process

At first, Valley Health wasn't planning to use this system in the Pediatrics department, because they were worried the kids wouldn't understand it, or think it was a game. The Pediatric nurses, on the other hand, wanted to have this available for their patients. When it was implemented, it worked very well.

RED ALERT Integration

Valley Health also uses the 1Call RED ALERT notification system. "We are sending reminders out through RED ALERT, every so many hours, reminding the nurses 'to chart your medications,'" Lorraine said. Susan added, "That has brought up scores on some of the floors that are very busy and always turning over beds and patients."

Future Plans

This process is currently used with the alphanumeric pagers that the nurses carry, "but our system is set up to send a page to a BlackBerry® or a cell phone, or any device," Lorraine stated.

Also in the future, Valley Health plans to use this process to page

nurses when patients have finished watching a video, or completed educational materials about a particular medication, for example.

"We are trying to improve our patient satisfaction scores, our HCAP scores," Susan commented.

About 1Call

For over 35 years, AMTELCO has been a leading provider of enhanced communications innovations. The 1Call Division of AMTELCO is a leader in developing healthcare-specific applications that are being used by hundreds of hospitals and healthcare organizations worldwide. The primary focus for 1Call and AMTELCO is to design applications that offer cutting-edge technology to reduce labor costs, eliminate errors, and increase efficiency.

About GetWellNetwork

GetWellNetwork entertains, educates, and empowers patients throughout the patient journey using the bedside TV in the hospital, mobile devices, Web or Cable TV at home. This patient-centered approach improves both satisfaction and outcomes for patients and hospitals. GetWellNetwork is recognized by KLAS® as the Interactive Patient Systems category leader and exclusively endorsed by the American Hospital Association. Visit www.GetWellNetwork.com.



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