



Stillwater Medical Center

Acute Care Hospital Teams Up with Vocera to Optimize Workflows and Improve Patient Experience

Striving to continuously provide the highest standards of patient care, Stillwater Medical Center (SMC) promotes an environment of creative solutions that advance clinical excellence and quality improvement. This 117-bed acute care general hospital is part of a regional health center that provides services throughout north central Oklahoma, using some of the latest technological developments.

Despite its small size, SMC earned a reputation as a high-tech hospital after partnering with Rauland and Vocera in 2013 to integrate the Vocera® Communication Badge with its nurse call system, enabling patient requests to be sent directly to the most appropriate member of the care team. One month after implementation, SMC improved its HCAHPS scores for hospital staff responsiveness from 74% to 82.4% and pain management satisfaction scores from 66% to 81.3%.

SMC has also implemented the MEDITECH computerized provider order entry (CPOE) system to optimize its physician ordering practices and reduce errors by eliminating handwritten orders. This improvement satisfied provisions of the Healthcare Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, which requires healthcare organizations to begin CPOE implementation by 2015 to achieve Meaningful Use compliance standards for electronic health records.

SMC decided to introduce technology further into the CPOE system, following internal staff requests for more timely notification of physician orders. They wanted to leverage technology they already had in place, so with the help of Forward Advantage, a healthcare solutions provider with whom SMC has had a productive 15 year relationship, SMC now sends select physician orders from its MEDITECH CPOE system to the Vocera Badge using a Smart Route within Forward Advantage's Communication Director automated report distribution solution. This technological synergy has helped improve the reliability of order delivery to the right care team members, speed order turnaround times, and better serve the needs of patients.

New Process for Streamlining Physician Orders

SMC's commitment to quality patient care drives the importance of strategic communications as a key component of its healthcare practice.

"Communication is a foundational pillar that every hospital should have at the top of their priority list," says Chris Roark, Chief Information Officer. "As the speed of staff communication increases, so does coordination of care, allowing the right treatment to be administered at the right time."

With an eye on optimizing efficiencies and ensuring the highest quality of care, SMC's respiratory therapy staff recognized the opportunity to improve the communication process of placing orders. The previous workflow required a physician to write an order that was then placed into MEDITECH by a secretary and subsequently sent to a designated printer in a specific department or area of the hospital. This process proved inefficient when therapists were treating patients or working in other areas of the hospital because the physical distance from the printer made it difficult to quickly obtain and fulfill order requests.

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LaDeana Burrell

Network Administrator
Stillwater Medical Center

"We were concerned that clinicians were unable to work as efficiently as possible since they were constantly shifting back-and-forth to their offices to check for order requests," says Patricia Decker, SMC's Clinical Manager of Respiratory Care, EKG/EEG and Sleep Lab. "There were also challenges like paper shortages, system failures, and outages that led to delays in order delivery."

To improve communication, the IT department worked in concert with clinical stakeholders and proposed a new solution that would leverage their existing hospital communication investments.

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Instantaneous Communication of Physician Orders

To integrate the Vocera Badge with the MEDITECH CPOE system, SMC chose to partner with Forward Advantage. This approach allowed SMC to create an effective solution that produces instantaneous communication of orders. Now, notifications for new orders are sent directly to the Vocera Badge, eliminating the need and time required to retrieve paper orders from printers.

Prior to engaging with Forward Advantage, members of SMC's clinical team, administration, and directors met to identify specific needs that the design of the new ordering solution should address. For example, due in part to HIPAA regulations and the need to protect private patient information, SMC selected specific data for routing to the Vocera Badge: patient room number, location, priority, procedure, and category.

"Forward Advantage helped us implement a strategy to expand our use of Communication Director to send notifications to the Vocera Badge with the appropriate, essential information," says Burrell. "They were receptive to our ideas and actively addressed all of our needs to properly execute our vision."

Through this partnership, Forward Advantage delivered a customized solution in only a few months that met SMC's objectives and delivered product solution that fulfilled its vision.

Transformation Recognized by Community and Staff

The introduction of instantaneous physician order notifications has furthered SMC's commitment to effective communication and quality patient care. In addition to saving staff time and improving workflow efficiency, staff members are now more accessible to patients and providing care rather than chasing down orders. Relationships with physicians are also enhanced because they can now more confidently rely upon each other to respond quickly to patient needs.

"Our staff is able to spend more time at the bedside and build stronger relationships with patients," says Liz Michael, Vice President of Patient Care Services. "The community has been extremely receptive to the new technology and recognizes how it has improved our efficiency."

The current implementation has focused on improving Respiratory Therapy orders, EKG orders, and dietary assessments; housekeeping and lab orders are planned for the near future. By quickly sending notifications to housekeepers and sanitation professionals for recent discharges, SMC aims to expedite bed turnover rates and ensure beds are available for new patients.

"We are focused on becoming a more efficient and leaner facility. Our partnerships with Vocera and Forward Advantage help us to achieve optimal workflows, and therefore, a better patient experience," says Roark.



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Liz Michael
Vice President of
Patient Care Services
Stillwater Medical Center

For More Information

Visit www.vocera.com,
email info@vocera.com,
or telephone 1-888-9-VOCERA
(1-888-962-2372).



Vocera Communications, Inc.
525 Race Street
San Jose, CA 95126
tel: +1 408 882 5100
fax: +1 408 882 5101
toll free: +1 888 9VOCERA
www.vocera.com

Vocera Communications UK Ltd.
100 Longwater Avenue
Green Park
Reading, Berkshire
RG2 6GP
United Kingdom
tel: +44 0 844 335 1237
fax: +44 0 118 945 0493
www.vocera.co.uk

Vocera Canada
8 Market Street, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1M6
Canada
tel: +1 416 923 2900
fax: +1 416 923 2981