The Chester County Hospital Enhances Clinician Productivity and Patient Satisfaction with Healthcare Communications Terminal Solution from Siemens Enterprise Communications

The Challenge

The Chester County Hospital and Health System, an award-winning organization dedicated to the health and well-being of the people in Chester County, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas, is anchored by its 220-bed hospital in West Chester, PA. It's a busy place, where clinicians work tirelessly to provide low-cost, high-quality care while meeting stringent HIPAA and Joint Commission requirements.

"We have many different applications installed, so our clinicians can obtain accurate and timely information about their patients," says Mary Buckley, Vice President of IT. "Before implementing this new system, they spent a lot of time logging into and out of each separate application. And when a nurse was trying to administer medication to 10 or 15 patients, all of those minutes added up."

When the hospital decided to roll out the Siemens Healthcare Med Administration Check (MAK) application, which leverages barcode technology to ensure that patients get the right medication at the right time, it became clear that a new approach was needed. Explains Buckley, "An important part of the checking process for this application was the visual display on a bedside workstation—either a check mark, or a big, red 'X.' We could have had the nurse roll in a computer on wheels, or COW, every time medications had to be administered, but we knew there had to be a better and more modern solution. The answer seemed to be installing a workstation in every patient room, and that's what took us down the path to the Healthcare Communications Terminal."

The Solution

The Healthcare Communications Terminal from Siemens Enterprise Communications puts critical patient data at the clinicians' fingertips wherever they may be. Approximately 240 terminals have been deployed at the hospital, and more than 2,000 clinicians, including doctors, nurses, interns, and staff in ancillary departments, such as respiratory, laboratory, and pharmacy, use the system. Clinicians can access the patient's electronic medical record, perform documentation of key assessments, view X-Rays and lab results and have easier and improved adherence to The Chester County Hospital's policies.

"Nurses and physicians log on with one password, which gives them secure access to any application they are authorized to use," explains Kathy Zopf-Herling, MSN, RN-BC, Director of Nursing Informatics. "By tapping their 'smart card' against a reader on the computer in any patient room clinicians are logged on or off that device. When they tap out, they are not actually logged off our system completely; their current session is just disengaged from the computer they are working on at the time. They can then move on to the next patient's room, tap their card, and pick up exactly where they left off."

Photo courtesy of The Chester County Hospital and Health System

The solution is quickly proving its value. Buckley recalls, "I was in a patient's room a few weeks ago, and the patient asked the nurse, 'Do I have pneumonia?' He was coughing, and he knew that he'd had a chest x-ray and some recent lab work. Instead of leaving the room to go find the radiology report and the lab study, the nurse reached up, tapped into the terminal, and pulled up the x-ray and lab report within seconds." Prior to implementing the Healthcare Communications Terminal, it would have taken the nurse at least five minutes to retrieve the information.

"It adds a level of transparency to the patient care process that I think is ultimately a very beneficial thing. It empowers patients and strengthens the patient/doctor relationship," says Karen Pinsky, MD, Chief Medical Information Officer. "When something needs to be done, the patient knows why it needs to be done and knows that the physician did it, because they are having a conversation literally as it is happening. There's no mystery. And, that is very reassuring to patients."

Business Benefits

The Healthcare Communications Terminal delivers numerous benefits at The Chester County Hospital. For one thing, the device is always precisely where it's needed, ensuring rapid access to critical patient information; the clinician does not have to take time away from providing care to locate a mobile computing unit and wheel it back to the room. "We deliver healthcare, not IT," emphasizes Buckley. "The Healthcare Communications Terminal is making a big difference here at The Chester County Hospital by significantly streamlining our clinicians' workflow, while at the same time supporting our goals of excellent patient safety and satisfaction."

A related benefit lies in maximizing the productivity of agency nurses with Siemens Identity Management solution. In the past, it could take as long as 1.5 hours to provide access into core applications required for the nurse to deliver patient care. Now the process is quick and painless; and at the end of the shift, the access is automatically revoked with no need for IT involvement. "Identity Management makes the whole provisioning piece easier to deal with," says Buckley. "Especially given today's widespread nursing shortage, this is a huge benefit from the standpoint of security, ease of use, and productivity enhancement."

The single sign on capability not only saves valuable nursing time, but also helps the hospital meet HIPAA and Joint Commission security requirements. For example, the system eliminates the need for complex password management, because it satisfies the need to regenerate new passwords on a regular basis. "The Healthcare Communications Terminal is very intuitive," says Buckley. "It enables our clinicians to focus on delivering healthcare, rather than worrying about the technology."

While the terminals are currently dedicated to clinical use, they may also contribute to patient education in the future. "Patient education is very important to us," explains Buckley. "We want to make sure patients have the right information when they need it — in a consistent, repeatable format — so they can take care of themselves properly and avoid readmission."

In light of the increasingly important Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores — a key element in calculating future Medicare reimbursement — patient satisfaction is a major focus area for hospitals. By freeing clinicians to devote time to patient care and making pertinent information readily available, the Healthcare Communications Terminal also plays a significant role in improving patient satisfaction at The Chester County Hospital.

> "By tapping their 'smart card' against a reader on the computer in any patient room, clinicians are logged on or off that device. When they tap out, they are not actually logged off our system completely; their current session is just disengaged from the computer they are working on at the time. They can then move on to the next patient's room, tap their card, and pick up exactly where they left off."
>
> KATHY ZOPF-HERLING, MSN, RN-BC
> DIRECTOR OF NURSING INFORMATICS
> THE CHESTER COUNTY HOSPITAL