

# Lehigh Valley Health Network

## Improving Patient and Family Communication



### Overview

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) includes eight hospital campuses in northeastern Pennsylvania. With 26 health centers, numerous primary and specialty care physician practices, 20 ExpressCARE locations, and preferred provider services through Valley Preferred, LVHN is the region's only healthcare organization to have earned Magnet® recognition for nursing excellence.

### Challenges

- Keeping families and patients connected
- Improving the healthcare experience

### Solution

- Vocera Ease

### Results

- Reduced anxiety and improved family experience
- Increased patient loyalty to the hospital
- Improved clinical workflow

### Challenges

With a focus on innovation, connected care, and improving the healthcare experience, the perioperative leadership team at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) wanted a solution to enhance engagement with patients' families.

Patients and their families have the choice to elect where they have surgery, so it was critical that LVHN provided elevated services, that showed the hospital's level of commitment to transparency, better communication and demonstrated compassion and care.

### Solution

LVHN assembled a multidisciplinary team consisting of perioperative leadership, technology, and operating room staff to research and launch a new solution to improve care team and patient-family communication.

The LVHN team selected the Vocera® Ease patient-family engagement solution because it fit best with the compassionate culture and mission of the health network.

"It was our hope that connecting with patients' loved ones in a more timely and personal way would help provide more comfort and care to them," said Hope Johnson, DNP, MBA, RN, CNOR, NEA-BC, Administrator of Perioperative Services at LVHN.

Care team members use the Ease app to keep loved ones informed of the patient's status with secure messages using unlimited multi-lingual templates, photos, and videos. In turn, loved ones can respond to Ease updates with emojis, giving immediate feedback and support to caregivers. The messages disappear 60 seconds after being viewed, which provides an additional layer of security.

The individuals who receive Ease updates are selected by the patient, and everyone in the patient's contact network receives the same updates at the same time. So, one person doesn't have to carry the burden of updating others. Prior to a procedure, the LVHN pre-admissions team educates the patient and family on the app, letting them know Vocera Ease is available and how to use it.

The personalized messages sent via Ease serve as a bridge to face-to-face communication with the Operating Room team, offering updates to the family throughout their loved one's surgery. They also give families the freedom to await the outcome of the surgery outside of the typical hospital waiting room.

### Results

Since LVHN implemented the Vocera Ease app in 2017, more of the hospital's patients have been able to engage with loved ones across the country. LVHN can track patient and family experience using the app's customizable survey.

Based on survey results from just over three years of usage, LVHN sent 190,680 secure messages and photo updates to patients' families and friends across 50 states via Ease. These loved ones responded to care teams with more than 159,465 emojis, including thumbs-ups, hearts, and prayer hands. Some of the survey's free text responses included, "I think this is wonderful and was comforting during surgery. What a great addition to care!"

**92%**  
Strongly Agree

Because of Ease, they would recommend a hospital\*

**94%**  
Strongly Agree

Ease would influence their choice of hospital\*

**9.5/10**  
Experience Rating

Experience with Ease demonstrates compassionate care\*

*\*4955 patient families that received Ease updates from Lehigh Valley Health Network*

“The Vocera Ease updates go a long way to alleviate loved ones’ anxieties. By receiving real-time messages from our care team members directly on their smartphone, family members no longer worry or risk missing an update from the care team,” said Johnson.

While LVHN was using Vocera Ease before COVID-19 hit, the app became even more essential during the pandemic when visitors – even family – were not allowed into the hospital.

“The Vocera Ease patient-family engagement solution supports social distancing measures required by COVID-19 protocols,” explained Johnson. “It’s so powerful to be able to keep loved ones connected regardless of where they are located and ease the burden of worry for others, in the middle of a pandemic and beyond.”

## Looking Forward

The success and community demand for Vocera Ease has led LVHN to expand the use of the technology from procedural areas and into the Emergency Departments.

“Based on the results so far and feedback from patients and their loved ones, we feel the technology will continue supporting our goal of improving the healthcare experience,” Johnson said.

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**Hope Johnson, DNP, MBA, RN,  
CNOR, NEA-BC**

Administrator of Perioperative Services  
Lehigh Valley Health Network

## For More Information

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