Health First
Comforting Patients and Loved Ones

Challenges
When a person undergoes surgery, it can be stressful not only for the patient, but for their family and friends too. Patients’ loved ones want information from the operating room as soon as possible to know everything is okay. Waiting and wondering can be difficult.

Health First understood that a lack of timely or contextual information can cause worry and anxiety for friends and families. The organization decided it needed a solution to improve communication with patients’ loved ones and elevate the overall healthcare experience.

“As a patient-centric organization, part of our responsibility is to communicate with family members, giving them updates about their loved one’s condition and prognosis,” said Mark Rosenbloom, MD, Vice President of Clinical Transformation at Health First.

Solution
Health First evaluated the Vocera Ease application, a secure, cloud-based application that allows healthcare professionals to send text, photo, and video updates in real-time to the family and friends of patients. It decided to implement the Ease app at its four hospitals in 2020.

“The app can be downloaded by patients and their loved ones for free on their Apple or Android devices,” Rosenbloom explained. “Because downloading mobile apps is something nearly everyone has experience with these days, there is little to no learning curve to overcome. Following a simple registration process, a patient can select who will receive the app updates from their personal contact lists.”

Hospital staff can scan a patient’s medical bracelet to send messages to family members and friends, who can respond to the updates with emojis, giving immediate feedback and support to the care team. The messages keep loved ones updated on the patient’s progress, then disappear 60 seconds after being viewed.

“Even during the best of times, a hospital stay can cause anxiety for patients and their families,” Rosenbloom said. “Seeing a reassuring text or photo can give loved ones some peace of mind.”

“When the Vocera Ease app was first introduced to me and my team, we were excited by what it could do, and its potential for improving the patient and family experience,” Rosenbloom recalled. “We started out using the app in a pilot program in the operating rooms at our tertiary hospital. Because of the positive results, we expanded it to the operating rooms and cardiac catheterization labs at all four of our Health First hospitals.”

Results
Between April and December of 2020, care teams sent more than 34,000 secure updates to patients’ families and friends across all 50 states. In addition to use in the operating rooms and cardiac catheterization labs, the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) implemented the app.

The Ease app updates have made a positive impact on parents and grandparents of babies in the NICU.
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*Each and every Ease message is meaningful to patients and their loved ones,*
Rosenbloom said. *“During April and December 2020, our care team members received more than 46,000 prayer hands, thumbs-up and heart emojis in response to the messages they sent using the app. This metric emphasizes how impactful the updates are for families and friends.”*

Health First also has seen a significant improvement in its Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey (OAS CAHPS) scores at all of its hospitals since implementing the Vocera Ease application.