

Reading Health System

Reading Hospital Chooses Vocera Collaboration Suite to Enhance Clinical Communication and Collaboration

Since 1867, the Reading Health System has provided nationally recognized healthcare to southeast Pennsylvania. The Reading Hospital performs 19,000 surgical procedures each year; has specialty centers for oncology, cardiology, and maternity; houses a Level II Trauma Center; and the system includes a state-of-the-art rehabilitation hospital. Its 2014 distinctions include HealthGrades' Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence and America's 100 Best Hospital designations in cardiac care, coronary intervention, critical care, pulmonary care, and stroke care.

Always striving for ever-better quality and results, Reading Hospital continually looks for ways to improve the clinical care it delivers.

"The quality of care-team communication affects everything we do as healthcare providers, from patient safety to cost savings and enhanced revenue," says Eileen Tennity, Project Manager for Reading Health System. "We set a goal to implement a hospital-wide communication solution that would improve care-team communication and collaboration as well as the process for requesting physician consults."

Reading Hospital chose the new Vocera® Collaboration Suite, the only HIPAA-compliant voice and secure texting smartphone application that enables calling by role and by group, as well as broadcasting to a group. With the ability to integrate with more than 60 clinical systems, Vocera Collaboration Suite provides intelligent communication inside and outside the hospital, on both iPhone® and Android™ devices.

Vocera Solution Meets Criteria

Reading Health System's more than 1,000 physicians are a mix of owned, contracted, hospitalists, and others — all of whom must be able to receive requests for patient consults whenever they occur. The physicians also must interact with the hospital's recently implemented Epic electronic health record (EHR) system.

"Previously, physicians received 'push notifications' via pagers for consult requests," says Tennity. "The Epic EHR doesn't support this process — it requires physicians to check their Epic inboxes for requests — so we needed a better solution."

Even before the transition to the Epic system, nurses and hospitalists expressed frustration over the 'page and wait' scenario: Physicians often received pages when gowned up for surgery or otherwise unavailable. By the time they responded, the nurse or hospitalist had moved on to other tasks, setting up a cycle of phone tag.

Reading Hospital decided that it needed a smartphone-based system for on-call scheduling and for communication among all the members of the care teams, to augment the Vocera Badges used primarily by the nursing staff. The hospital evaluated available smartphone-based communication solutions using a number of specific criteria, including:

- A single, unified system that would accommodate smartphones, pagers, and internal and external phones
- Secure texting
- HIPAA-compliant and encrypted communication
- Audit trail for messages



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MD and CMIO
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- Ability to see contact presence and availability
- Option to send an FYI message for situations not requiring immediate response
- Ability to dial outside numbers
- Fully auditable critical alerts and alarms
- Caller ID block when calling patients
- ‘Broadcast everyone’ feature
- Call flow and escalation
- Follow-me capability
- Integration with the Epic EHR system

Vocera Collaboration Suite was able to meet all of Reading Hospital's criteria, while also leveraging the hospital's existing investment in Vocera technology. Even before physicians were deployed on Vocera Collaboration Suite, Vocera use at Reading Hospital was house-wide with nurses, hospitalists, and other care team members, such as Administration, Pharmacy, Radiology, Chaplains, Interpreting Services, PT, OT, RT, lab, dietary, and IT support. The number of Vocera users had jumped more than 30% in nine months, and 70% more calling groups were created. In that same period of time, another 20 departments across Reading Hospital were added to the Vocera ecosphere. Currently, the Vocera call volume has increased to more than 450,000 calls per month.

Secure, Flexible, and Scalable Communication for Care Teams

Vocera Collaboration Suite enhances the communication among members of Reading Health System's care teams, providing a seamless extension to the hands-free wearable Vocera Badges already in use at the hospital.

“Reading Health System has been a Vocera customer since 2008, and we have partnered with the company to help solve our clinical communication and workflow challenges,” says Jorge Scheirer, MD and CMIO, Reading Health System. “We integrated Vocera Collaboration Suite with Epic and are leveraging Vocera's on-call scheduling to send inpatient consultation requests to the appropriate covering physician, with an auditable trail. In addition, we are equipping our care managers (RNs) with Vocera-installed iPhone devices that connect them to our medical staff.”

Reading Health System has found Vocera Collaboration Suite ideal for a number of users within the hospital. For example:

- Physicians who need to receive lab results, pages, or on-call requests when they are not at the hospital
- Staff who share confidential information frequently and who need to be able to do so in a secure manner
- Managers and supervisors who need to be reached by staff — and who need to contact their teams regardless of their location
- Existing smartphone and tablet users who can streamline the devices they carry in their clinical practices
- Staff members who do not need a hands-free device and do not wear a Vocera Badge

“We chose Vocera Collaboration Suite because we believe it will improve care team collaboration at Reading Hospital, which will in turn improve the patient experience by connecting people and information through secure, integrated, intelligent communication, regardless of where care staff members are located,” says Tenny.

For More Information

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