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Mike McKenna, MD
VP Medical Management

ABOUT ADVOCATE LUTHERAN GENERAL

Member of Advocate Healthcare

Location: Park Ridge, Illinois

Beds: 645

Medical Staff: 1,150+

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Q&A with Advocate Lutheran General Hospital’s VP of Medical Management, Mike McKenna, MD

Advocate Lutheran General Hospital recently selected PerfectServe to help further its clinical integration program. During a recent conversation, Mike McKenna, MD, vice president of medical management, discussed why improving clinical communications is key to furthering clinical integration.

Lutheran General is part of the largest health care systems in the state of Illinois and one of the largest hospitals in the Chicago area. Named one of the top 100 hospitals in the nation, Lutheran General is a 645-bed tertiary, academic and research hospital, and a Level I trauma center. It is also home to Advocate Lutheran General Children’s Hospital, one of the most comprehensive providers of pediatric care in the state.

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Mike McKenna, MD, VP Medical Management

Q: Lutheran General is on the leading edge of clinical integration. Can you discuss how improving communications supports your efforts to achieve clinical integration?

A: We’ve been working on our clinical integration program for the past 10 years.

Clinical integration is really leading us down the path of evolving into a highly reliable organization that develops the right care model to get the best possible outcomes.

As part of that, communications is the backbone. We have to have ways we can communicate with each other in a timely and reliable fashion, to make sure things don’t drop through the cracks.

The PerfectServe system—which makes it extremely easy to find a physician and offers numerous ways to leave messages or get information to a doctor—will fit in well with our strategy.

Q: What are the elements of your clinical integration program?

A: One part of our program has been achieving the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet status. We offer patient care delivery models that are very effective in regards to nursing.

The second area of our program is communication, and that’s one of the reasons we chose PerfectServe.

The third area relates to information technology and ensuring we’re providing physicians the right level of support.

The fourth relates to the physician hospital organization—how committed the organization is to providing, contracting, pay-for-performance, and outcomes.

And the last is overall quality. We’re committed through our physician hospital organization and other elements of the program to provide the highest level of care possible.



Q: Do you see Lutheran General moving towards an accountable care organization (ACO)?

A: Advocate is becoming an ACO. ACOs have to reliably get information and data to clinicians to deliver care. We have to have very effective means of communication that are both timely and accurate, which help get the outcomes that are needed. So, all of our activities are leading us up to becoming an ACO.

Q: Why did Lutheran General decide to improve communications, and what do you see as the primary benefits?

A: I was familiar with PerfectServe at a prior job and had some experience with it in private practice. I realized there are significant benefits in having a communication vehicle that allows physicians to customize it and support their practices in a way that is best for them.

In private practice, we always had constant problems with our answering service and even our office, because it's hard for people to remember all the different ways that physicians want to be reached.

On a certain day, they may want to receive messages one way, and another day a different way. And it's hard to have all those rules written down on paper or just try to remember them.

I was intrigued by the concept of PerfectServe. The more we looked into it, the more we thought that it would really benefit physicians in regards to making them more efficient and making Lutheran General a better place for physicians to practice.

On top of that, PerfectServe will help us in the hospital by making it more efficient for our nurses. A large part of every day is taken up trying to contact people, and PerfectServe streamlines it and makes it easier for nurses and other healthcare workers to contact each other.

“If you are serious as an organization—that you want to improve physician satisfaction—PerfectServe is one tool that definitely demonstrates you are serious.”

Mike McKenna
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Q: How do you expect PerfectServe will impact physician satisfaction?

A: I don't think it's PerfectServe by itself, but it's a commitment by the organization to say “we're going to make this the best place for physicians to practice.”

As part of that, we're looking at how physicians work and what are the barriers to making them the most efficient as possible.

We think that if you are serious as an organization—that you want to improve physician satisfaction—PerfectServe is one tool that definitely demonstrates you are serious.

Not only that, PerfectServe also has patient safety benefits and nursing satisfaction benefits.

For example, if you look at patient safety events, the most common thread that goes through them is communication errors. People either didn't communicate, had trouble communicating, or some aspect of that.

You don't want to have barriers that make it difficult to get ahold of someone.

Q: Do you think having PerfectServe is going to give Chicago-area physicians an incentive to select Lutheran General as the best place to practice?

A: We're committed to making Lutheran General the best place for physicians to practice in the northern part of Chicago.

When physicians come to work here, we want it to be an easier place to get things done, more reliable, higher safety, and higher satisfaction.

Communications is a critical part of this. For example, how do we store your messages while you're in surgery? Physicians aren't supposed to be taking calls when they're in the OR, and it's distracting and can lead to errors. How can we make it really easy for physicians to get consults and other messages?

PerfectServe solves these and many other problems. It's doing something different. It's the first thing we're doing as part of our physician satisfaction strategy that will distinguish Lutheran General from our competitors.