

SUCCESS STORY

Improving on-call cardiac team response time through streamlined communications



Hospital:

St. John Macomb-Oakland Hospital

Health System:

St. John Providence Health System

Location:

Warren, MI

Size:

- Two campuses, Warren and Madison Heights
- 535 beds
- More than 1,200 physicians in over 45 specialties
- 3,436 nurses and associates

Center of Excellence not satisfied with status quo, looks for improvements

St. John Macomb-Oakland Hospital is a 535-bed facility, split between two campuses in suburban Detroit. It provides a full array of medical and surgical specialties, including Centers of Excellence in cardiovascular services, cancer care and neurosciences. In 2007, the hospital began to improve communication process accuracy and reliability across both campuses by using PerfectServe Synchrony™, which automatically identifies and provides an immediate, secure connection to the right care team member for any given clinical situation at any time.

St. John Macomb-Oakland is accredited as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center. It has also earned, for its expertise in cardiothoracic surgery with percutaneous coronary intervention, the prestigious three-star rating from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. To further focus its efforts on reducing the amount of time between a heart attack patient's arrival at the hospital and the time they receive treatment, St. John Macomb-Oakland began to look more closely at the cath lab team and protocols for notifying on-call team members.

The national standard of door-to-balloon time states that a healthcare team must proficiently deliver percutaneous coronary intervention in 90 minutes or less — a protocol the St. John Macomb-Oakland team already performs efficiently, typically delivering treatment in 70 minutes or less. Improved door-to-balloon time is a measure of quality that requires the teamwork of several

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disciplines — one of which is care team communication, an area the hospital recognized could be improved with a more efficient on-call notification system.

Prior to implementing PerfectServe Synchrony, on-call cath lab physicians at St. John Macomb-Oakland relied on notifications from pagers activated by an internal contact center system, a standard process in many health systems today, including St. John Providence. In this process, operators were provided with an on-call physician schedule that outlined who should be called for an emergent cardiac case. According to Kathy Budka, a clinical manager for both invasive and noninvasive cardiology at St. John Macomb-Oakland, “This process ate crucial minutes and seconds in the critical door-to-balloon time. The operators were limited by the technology they had available to them, resulting in increased wait times.”

Cath lab team assesses current communication landscape

Monday through Friday, the cath lab department is staffed from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., with 24-hour coverage on weekends and holidays. The on-call team picks up the off hours and typically consists of four clinical members in addition to the interventional cardiologist on-call. In the operator/pager system, a silo was created by paging only these clinical team members — creating a disconnect with other members of the patient’s care team who would benefit from receiving status updates around the patient’s care in a critical situation.

Upon accepting the notification, on-call staff are required to be at the hospital in 30 minutes or less. However, the operator/pager system hindered staff response time with frequent holds, often causing staff to begin making their way to the hospital to meet the requirement before they’d spoken with the operator. Upon reaching the operator while en route, many times they would find out they were not required to report until later — a waste of physicians’ and team members’ personal time.

After identifying room for improvement in the on-call process, leaders at St. John Macomb-Oakland realized that continuing to use the operator/pager system was not the most effective way to manage these critical communications. So began the search for new options.

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Solution found in an existing tool

In the fall of 2015, the team at St. John Macomb-Oakland connected with PerfectServe to build on the original platform, PerfectServe Synchrony, which had already been implemented across both campuses. The team opted to add care team alerts, a module of PerfectServe Synchrony, to provide immediate notification of emergent clinical events and promote rapid care team response.

PerfectServe worked with the hospital to determine that care team alerts were the best solution, and ultimately laid out a strategy for the cath lab notification implementation, one that has been customized to St. John Macomb-Oakland's infrastructure, workflow and physician schedules and preferences.

Since the cath lab care team alert went live in early February 2016, leadership at St. John Macomb-Oakland has worked with approximately 20 cath lab physicians to educate them about the new communication process, teaching them how to use and integrate the technology into the on-call routine. Due to focused training and standardization, the hospital has seen high adoption rates and growing enthusiasm as physicians experience the broad impact of the now-streamlined on-call alerts.

A more effective notification procedure

With care team alerts from PerfectServe Synchrony, each team member's role has an associated on-call schedule. This schedule allows team members to change their individual schedules in real time within PerfectServe Synchrony — allowing for more timely, accurate and effective communication. A physician's schedule can change in the blink of an eye, and the flexibility to adjust it in real time allows other care team members to always view accurate scheduling information, avoiding confusion and potential wasted time.

If an emergent procedure is needed, a member of the patient's care team initiates the notification process to the on-call cath lab team via PerfectServe Synchrony's desktop application, or by calling PerfectServe. On-call cath lab physicians receive the notification directly on their mobile devices and can immediately check the details, respond and make their way to the hospital — without spending additional time calling back and potentially being put on hold.

Unlike before, each notification is also sent to ancillary members of the patient's care team; they also receive updates about the alert and information

“*PerfectServe’s effect on our on-call team’s response time has been truly impactful.*”

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associated with it (e.g., type of response, time of arrival, etc.). Since many clinicians are involved in a cardiac case, the notification process helps drive coordination among the full care team — a critical aspect in providing exceptional patient care.

New process results in faster patient care and transparent communication to broader care team

To date, results have been overwhelmingly positive and have driven improved, more efficient communication in the on-call notification process. Budka noted, “With the time sensitivity involved around heart attacks, the benefit of an efficient alert process with no time wasted is invaluable.”

By eliminating manual components of the alert process, St. John Macomb-Oakland has decreased the chance that an error will be made or that records will be incomplete. Often, when the operator was juggling multiple sites at once, information that was put off to be recorded later was never captured at all. PerfectServe’s care team alerts provide automated reporting, ensuring the right people are contacted and the alert is accounted for.

PerfectServe’s care team alerts are also automatically escalated to appropriate backup contacts when necessary. In each case, alerts are sent to first-tier clinical contacts multiple times within a certain time period. If there is no response, an alert is then sent to an assigned backup contact, typically a manager or team lead, informing the individual that no contact has been made and allowing adjusted action to take place. This feature ensures that no matter the situation, the call will receive a response in a timely manner.

Continuous quality improvement ensures the growth and consistent evolution of a process that works — redefining the standard of care. The integration of PerfectServe Synchrony care team alerts in the hospital’s communication processes has significantly improved the cath lab team’s response time. Door-to-balloon time is an important indication of quality; on-call physicians need a streamlined and efficient solution that not only saves time, but enables their response and action to be communicated to the broader team. PerfectServe’s automated technology has provided St. John Macomb-Oakland’s team with the ability to advance the efficacy of its communication and improve patient care.