

SUCCESS STORY

New technology simplifies complex resident communication workflows



Hospital name: Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center

Health system: Mercy Health

Physicians: 852

Residents: 160+

Location: Toledo, OH

Like many other health systems in the U.S., Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center's most common communication channels for physicians were operators, phones and pagers. The emergence of text messaging as a fast and easy way to communicate quickly became the "path of best efficiency," especially with residents at St. Vincent.

Established more than 160 years ago in Toledo, Ohio, Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center is the critical care regional referral and teaching center within the Mercy system. With 852 physicians on staff, more than 61,000 Emergency Department visits and more than 17,000 inpatient admissions per year, the need for a streamlined and secure clinical communications process was paramount.

Dr. Randall (Randy) King, CMIO and chief of staff at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center, says, "We were probably a pretty standard large community hospital with a bunch of residents who communicated with our physicians, primarily through our operators, a paper call schedule, phone numbers and pagers." While the hospital's communication processes seemed to be standard, internal discussions revealed that text messaging had emerged as a newer, faster, easier way for residents and attendings to connect with each other.

Dr. King continues, "We couldn't help but notice that [residents] were extremely quick to adopt text messaging. The residents, who are usually closer to the forefront of technology than others in the organization as they're a younger group...had taken the path of best efficiency and had been texting communications back and forth...because it works."

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However, the IT staff at St. Vincent quickly realized that this “path of best efficiency” was not secure. Because securing protected health information was a priority, the organization immediately began searching for a solution that allowed easy and secure communication between residents, attendings, nurses and other clinicians — and would ultimately benefit their patients by enabling fast and efficient clinical decision making.

Dr. King and his team at St. Vincent learned about PerfectServe from their colleagues at sister hospital, St. Rita’s Medical Center, which had just completed implementation of the solution. After internal discussions with the CEO and regional leadership, the team decided PerfectServe was also the right solution for St. Vincent.

Technology shines light on need for process improvement

St. Vincent began with a pilot program. As the implementation progressed, it became apparent just “how much the PerfectServe solution illuminated some legacy processes that were profoundly dysfunctional,” said Dr. King.

Because paper call schedules were not being updated each time a physician’s schedule changed, nurses were often making multiple phone calls in an attempt to reach the right person. Since the manual process was convoluted, automating it with technology immediately brought the legacy issues to light and physicians clearly saw the impact of not keeping schedules up to date.

PerfectServe’s Dynamic Intelligent Routing™ capability automatically identifies and provides immediate connection to the right care team member for any given clinical situation at every moment in time. If physicians didn’t update their schedules in the PerfectServe mobile app, they still ended up getting calls that they were unable to answer and should have been routed to the designated covering resident or attending.

St. Vincent introduced a process improvement step to address this challenge, and the hospital began holding physicians accountable for updating their own call schedules. To effectively manage this new process, physicians are now mandated to keep their schedules updated directly in the PerfectServe mobile app.

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Additionally, St. Vincent also now requires 700 of the employed physicians and residents to use PerfectServe as the only mode of secure communication with each other. All other physicians who are affiliated with St. Vincent are also strongly encouraged to use the solution.

Successful implementation generates high adoption

St. Vincent’s IT staff partnered with the PerfectServe professional services team for a smooth implementation and go-live. The St. Vincent team allocated staff members and other technical infrastructure to support physicians during the PerfectServe implementation, which helped the transition. While analog phone and pager users required a bit more hand-holding, the majority of technology-savvy physicians were fully functional within a month.

Dr. King reports, “It was a very straightforward transition. Physicians downloaded the phone app and began immediately reaping the benefits. Those on the app get quicker information — like traumas coming in or transfers with special needs. Historically residents and physicians were paging and waiting on call-backs. Now they use PerfectServe to quickly and securely trade information back and forth.”

In fact, St. Vincent now has anywhere from 15,000 to 17,000 secure messages via PerfectServe in any given month. Dr. King continues, “That’s huge when you think about it — the ability for physicians to interact at that high level for minute-by-minute patient care. It’s a dramatic improvement over the old way of communicating.”

In addition to standard text messages, the staff at St. Vincent realized another significant advantage with PerfectServe — the ability to send attachments securely. They can now share X-rays, photos or images, and more easily consult with other physicians on patient care.

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With the implementation of a secure care team collaboration solution and internal process changes, Dr. King and others at St. Vincent have ensured that patient-centered communications happen securely and quickly. “It

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is encouraging to know we have a tool [physicians] can use that makes communication easier and faster for physicians, patients and their families. I can get more done in a given day using PerfectServe than I ever could before," reports Dr. King.

Continued vision for improvement

The team at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center plans to broaden the use of PerfectServe throughout the health system. According to Dr. King, they are focused on getting every physician using the solution as well as keeping them trained and compliant with new processes and security protocols.

The hospital is also looking forward to enhanced functionality for its nursing staff. Nurses have recognized the rapid transition to secure texting and want the ability to text directly and securely with physicians.

Dr. King is anxious for other northern market facilities, Mercy St. Charles Hospital and Mercy St. Anne Hospital, to implement PerfectServe so they can truly have seamless care team collaboration among clinicians throughout the system.

About Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center

Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center is the critical care regional referral and teaching center within the Mercy system, a seven-hospital, faith-based system serving Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan.

Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center was Toledo's first hospital, opening its doors in 1855. Eight generations later, it is still charting the course for a healthy community. St. Vincent pioneered many of Toledo's medical "firsts," from the city's first school of nursing in 1869, to the first X-ray equipment in 1915, to the area's first Life Flight service in 1979. St. Vincent is now home to five Life Flight air ambulances, holds the highest designation for treating high-risk mothers and babies, and is a Level I Trauma Center for children and adults. St. Vincent is also the region's only Burn Care and Reconstructive Center. St. Vincent maintains a completely modern, attractive and secure campus, and takes a leadership role in providing quality medical education and community development.

About PerfectServe

PerfectServe is healthcare's most comprehensive and secure care team collaboration platform. The platform is unique in its ability to improve communication process accuracy and reliability via its proprietary Dynamic Intelligent Routing™ capability, which automatically identifies and provides immediate connection to the right care team member for any given clinical situation at every moment in time. More than 400,000 clinicians in forward-looking organizations across the U.S. rely on PerfectServe to help them speed time to treatment, expedite care transitions, enhance the patient experience and reduce HIPAA compliance risk. Headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, with offices in Alpharetta, Georgia, and Chicago, PerfectServe has helped clinicians provide better care since 2000. Follow us on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, and subscribe to our blog.