

Lake Wales Medical Center + TigerConnect

Lake Wales Medical Center reduced consult request times from days to hours by streamlining consult orders with TigerConnect, a secure clinical communication platform that also improved emergency department throughput and reduced length of stay.



**74% reduction in overall
consult request times**

*Average time reduction
from 29 hours to 7.4 hours*



**90% reduction in GI consult
request times**

*Average GI reduction consult request
time from 46 hours to 4 hours*



**23% reduction in surgical
request times**

*Average surgical request
time from 6 to 5 hours*

“As a nurse, I know how difficult it is to wait for a consult and wonder if the physician has even seen your page or listened to your voicemail. With TigerConnect, not only has there been a huge reduction in our consult request times, but now our nurses can see when their messages are being read, which means they can spend more time with patients and less time on the phone.”

--Emily Stutz, RN, clinical informaticist at Lake Wales Medical Center

Challenge

Lake Wales Medical Center is a 160-bed community hospital in Lake Wales, Florida, offering inpatient, outpatient, medical, surgical, and emergency care with more than 5,000 admissions and more than 4,100 surgeries per year. Lake Wales employs 46 physicians and more than 200 other clinicians and contracts with 83 physicians. With most credentialed physicians working in independent practices, Lake Wales' nurses and employed physicians often request consults with specialists who are out in the community. The former process for requesting a consult, however, was complicated. The request would be ordered in the electronic health record (EHR) system, then printed for a nurse to retrieve, and then a call or page would be placed to the physician. The nurse, however, was never certain if or when the recipient listened to the voicemail or saw the page. As a result, consult requests could take longer than two days while patients waited for care to proceed. An attempt to expedite the process by routing call requests through an operator yielded little to no improvement.

Solution

In 2017, Lake Wales switched from their former consult request process to TigerConnect, a secure, HIPAA-compliant mobile clinical communication platform. TigerConnect was made available on all workstations-on-wheels and desktop computers throughout the facility. Nursing staff was also given the option to access TigerConnect on their smartphones, if they desired. Training classes were held for day and night shift nurses, while physicians were trained as they were available in the hospital. In addition to secure texting for consult requests and care team communication, Lake Wales also implemented TigerConnect's Roles feature, which allows nurses to look up physicians based on their specialty instead of needing to know their name or contact information.

Since the TigerConnect implementation, clinicians now only need to find the right specialist on-call in Roles and then send a secure text with the consult request. Attached to the message, they can include patient chart data, test results, including electrocardiogram strips, and images from its Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS). Sending the information with the request offers additional context and allows the physician to review materials before responding, improving efficiency. In addition, with TigerConnect's Message Status feature, the clinician sending the request or message can verify that the message has been sent and when it has been viewed.

Results

The consult request response times for Lake Wales Medical Center have decreased on average by nearly 75% since the TigerConnect implementation in June 2017, according to one study the hospital conducted of various specialties including cardiology, pulmonology, surgical, and others. One notable example is a request to a gastroenterologist that before TigerConnect took 46 hours for the consult to occur. After TigerConnect, the average response time was just a little over four hours.

Another example was a request to a pulmonologist that took more than five hours before TigerConnect, but was only 38 minutes after implementation. With these faster response times, average length of stay is decreasing along with patient "dwell time" in the emergency department (ED), both of which contribute to greater patient satisfaction. ED performance is especially crucial for Lake Wales because that is where the bulk of their patients are admitted.

The key to implementation success was having a physician champion, the chief-of-staff, who had used TigerConnect previously at his practice, and understood the efficiencies and improved communication it could bring to hospital workflows. The hospital plans to expand TigerConnect usage by automating more processes, such as Intelligent Shift-Based Routing through an integration with their scheduling system, so the right consult can be obtained even faster.

About TigerConnect

As healthcare's largest provider of clinical communication solutions, TigerConnect helps physicians, nurses, and other staff communicate and collaborate more effectively, accelerating productivity, reducing costs, and improving patient outcomes. With 6,000 facilities, 99.99% uptime, and over 10 million messages processed each day, TigerConnect continually delivers advanced product innovations and integrates with critical hospital systems such as the EHR, nurse call, and scheduling solutions.

Website
www.tigerconnect.com

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