

Case Study: Mt. Hood Hospice

"Because every day is a gift" is the slogan of Mt. Hood Hospice and a reality for the 25 employees and 50 volunteers who serve its patients throughout Oregon's Multnomah and Clackamas counties. An independent, not-for-profit, community-based organization, Mt. Hood has provided assistance and support to families coping with terminal illnesses for more than 30 years.

The Challenge

By its very nature, hospice work involves a broader range of specialties than most medical practices. In addition to RNs and a physician, Mt. Hood employs everything from social workers and housekeepers to chaplains and massage therapists—not to mention the many volunteers who donate their time and expertise to the cause.

All of Mt. Hood's 35-40 patients live in private homes and adult care facilities spread over a wide area. As nurses and others visit them, they often need to relay critical new developments in a patient's condition and receive instructions about care. In a HIPAA-compliant world, this was a challenge.

"We were using phones a lot," says Lee Ann Church, executive director of Mt. Hood Hospice, "and text too, but that runs into compliance issues. We'd often have to talk about that patient you saw this morning' rather than using a name, which would be much easier."

For medical director Dr. Glen Patrizio, the single physician in the practice, the problem was particularly acute. Since he has to be consulted on all medical decisions, he found himself spending far too much time on the phone.

"People always want to get a hold of me," he says. "Nurses often contact me and say that a patient is having trouble, or they ask if they can try something out, or if I approve of a change in dosing. I have to respond before they can take action."

Requirements

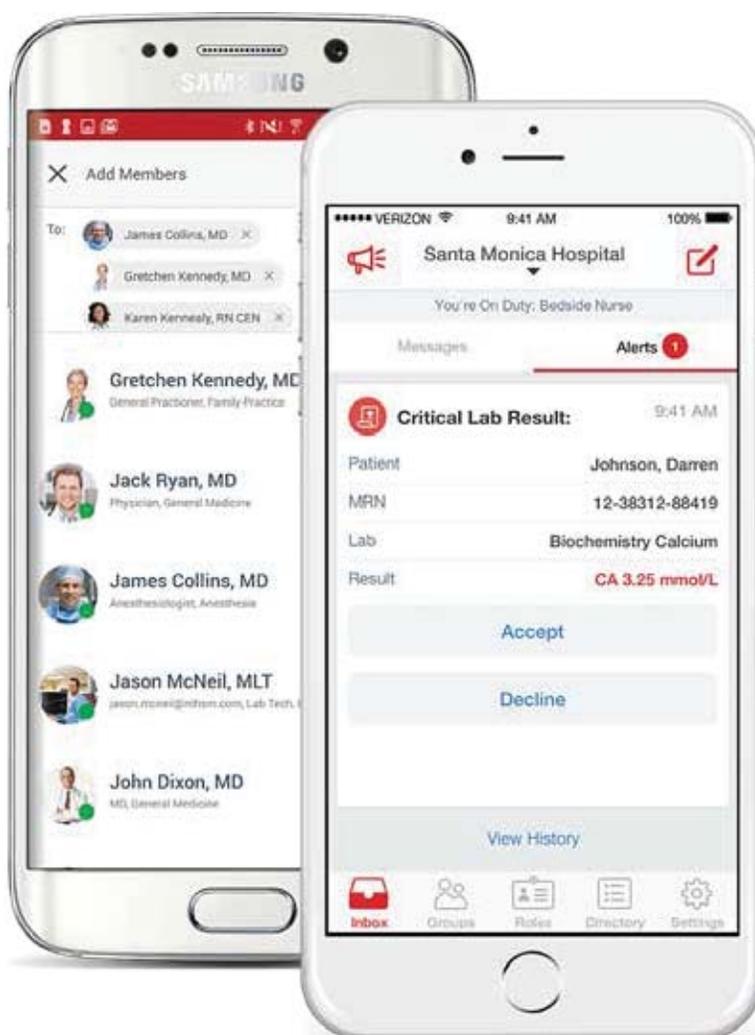
In early 2012, Church started looking for a secure texting solution on the Internet and soon found a number of possibilities. When evaluating, she matched their capabilities against the hospice's particular needs:

- Multi-media Messaging: Mt. Hood's staff wanted to be able to take pictures of a patient's condition and send them to Dr. Patrizio.
- HIPAA Compliant Features: The system had to provide the robust encryption and audit controls to qualify for HIPAA compliance.
- Multi-Platform Access: Mt. Hood needed a system that was available on all popular device types. In addition, the receptionist and Director of Nursing (DON) also needed to be able to access the system using desktop computers.

Implementing TigerConnect

After evaluating the options, Church settled on TigerConnect. The feature that made the biggest difference was its ability to send photos.

“What is so nice is that you can take a picture and send it immediately,” says Church. So if we’re doing wound care or we’re concerned about a new bruise, we can take a picture, send it, and get a quick response.”



In implementing TigerConnect, Mt. Hood established a three-stage communication workflow: Phone calls were still used for emergency and very urgent requests. Texts covered all issues that needed to be dealt with that day, but not immediately. Secure email was reserved for things that could wait.

Benefits

Amara debuted the product in late 2012, concurrent with the system's positive clinical results being reported in an independent publication at the International Sepsis Forum in Paris. It is currently deployed at multiple hospitals in the United States.

- Efficient Communication: Questions and requests from the field are now quickly and efficiently handled.
- Optimized Patient Care: Nurses can easily send images of a patient's condition and receive instructions on care.
- Easy Integration: TigerConnect makes it easy to bring new employees on board with support for multiple device platforms, available for mobile devices and the web.
- Secured Data: Industry-leading encryption capabilities and limited message lifespans help the practice stay secure and compliant.

"To put it simply, TigerConnect makes life easier and improves care," says Patrizio, "Phone calls take a lot of energy. Now I can look at a question, think about it, and pop off a fast answer. At first, I was reluctant to deal with texting; now I can't live without it."

Conclusion

With TigerConnect, Mt. Hood Hospice has found it much easier to deal with the communications challenges faced by many hospices. Now staff members respond more quickly and continue to deliver on its promise: making each day a gift for its patients.

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. The company's commitment to client success is reflected in its broad support organization that works directly with clients at every stage to streamline communication workflows and achieve the highest possible ROI.

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