

# PENN MEDICINE

## THE CHALLENGE

Imagine your hospital is flooded. Would you be able to get a detailed message to 150 people quickly—wherever they are—all at the same time? What if severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are approaching? How do you warn 13,000 medical center employees? These were just some of the scenarios the contact center team at Penn Medicine considered as they planned their critical communications approach for the future.

“Our emergency notification system (ENS) was at the end of its life, so we needed a new solution,” said Amy Zylstra, associate executive director of the contact center. “We took the opportunity to really think about what we wanted from our communications system as a whole.”

With four hospitals, a total of 1,893 beds, and a number of outpatient facilities and community physician practices, Penn Medicine had some complex communication requirements. Staff were wasting a lot of time moving from one database to another, and increasingly they needed the ability to send different types of alert messages (voice, text, email, and page) all at once. Staff were also hoping to have the flexibility to incorporate a lot of their own custom configurations as changes were needed.

The goal was to streamline functions so the call center process was quicker and easier to use, minimizing the chance of errors that could ultimately affect patients.



## THE SOLUTION

An interdepartmental group of call center staff, IT, and safety personnel spent a year exploring their options. They put each potential solution through a rigorous due diligence process and carefully considered a number of options. A guiding priority was to provide a safer environment for staff and patients by strengthening their communication tools.



## OVERVIEW

Penn Medicine, located in Philadelphia, is one of the world's leading academic medical centers. It comprises four hospitals and outpatient centers throughout the region. These include the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania—recognized as one of the nation's top "Honor Roll" hospitals by U.S. News & World Report, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, Chester County Hospital, Penn Wissahickon Hospice, and Pennsylvania Hospital—the nation's first hospital, founded in 1751.

## INDUSTRY

Healthcare

## BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Increase safety for patients and staff
- Optimize response to trauma and critical events
- Enhance efficiency and flexibility of call center

## SOLUTION

Spok® solutions for emergency notification, on-call scheduling, and web directory

## RESULTS

- Response time to critical events improved by 67 percent
- Staff quickly learned and customized user-friendly system
- Robust solution flexible enough to meet changing needs as organization grows

Whatever they chose had to integrate well with all their other systems and function smoothly. They found what they needed with Spok's integrated emergency notification, web directory, and on-call scheduling solutions.



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Amy Zylstra  
Associate Executive Director of the Contact Center

"It's a robust system and offers a number of different applications," said Zylstra. "Our staff is very excited about Spok because they don't have to go outside the notification software to look up names in the directory or figure out who is on call. The solution improves our call center process and saves time, both for us and alert recipients."

### THE RESULTS

The results were immediate. Response time to critical events—both internal and external—has been cut by 67 percent now that communicating with precise groups has become a streamlined process.

"Getting a message out to 150 people sometimes took an hour with the old system. Now we can get alerts out to that size group in 20 minutes or less," said Zylstra. The Spok solution delivers messages to the right devices based on end users' device preferences, helping ensure notifications are received by the right people quickly. This also eliminates the need to rely on just one method of contact.

The team can also adapt the solution to meet their exact needs. "We have more ownership of the application and can manipulate the system as we please. Previously we had to call the vendor to troubleshoot or make any changes. Now we can set up our own configuration of an application and perform a lot of the basic troubleshooting on our own," added Zylstra.

They liked Spok's emergency notification solution so much that it's being rolled out in their new, state-of-the-art trauma center at Penn Presbyterian. The \$144 million facility for advanced care is one of a kind, and the staff there had very high expectations. In order to respond to trauma patients most effectively, they were looking for a system that would allow them to input a lot of clinical information and simultaneously communicate it to a large team. They also wanted it to be user friendly and fast. After seeing the solution demonstrated, they were sold on it, said Zylstra. "There have been hundreds of activations so far, and they have been very happy with it."

The call center team continues to improve their systems and strategize for the future. "Due to all the people who now use Spok throughout Penn Medicine on a daily basis, we view Spok as a true partner rather than just another vendor."