UNIVERSITY OF UTAH HEALTH

THE CHALLENGE

University of Utah Health has more than 1,300 physicians across four hospitals and 10 clinics. Around 2010, University of Utah Health was overwhelmed with requests from some of these physicians who needed a way to communicate with one another via their smartphones. In response, University of Utah Health implemented a basic SMS-based communication system. Not long after, University of Utah Health's IT and telecommunications teams realized this system was not meeting the physicians' communication needs. They had issues with reliability—carrier delays and a lack of cellular coverage in some areas of the hospital—as well as security concerns.

"We heard of doctors receiving critical pages hours after they were sent, or missing pages entirely because of no-signal areas," said Dr. Michael Strong, University of Utah Health's chief medical information officer. Plus physicians were also using this unsecure system to send patients' protected health information (PHI), which was not HIPAA-compliant. "We knew we had to make a change," said Dr. Strong.

THE SOLUTION

A long-time customer of Spok's contact center solutions, University of Utah Health was a regular attendee at Spok's annual customer conferences. During the 2011 event University of Utah Health learned about Spok's secure texting solution, Spok Mobile®.

After the event, University of Utah Health and Spok worked together to organize a trial program for the Spok Mobile app. After successfully testing the solution with IT and telecom staff, the team rolled it out to a small group of tech-savvy physicians and clinical leadership to get their thoughts.

The first pilot group had positive feedback, so University of Utah Health went bigger: They added more Spok Mobile testers, made improvements to their infrastructure by saturating the campus with Wi-Fi and cellular coverage, and also evaluated competitive solutions.

OVERVIEW

University of Utah Health is the Intermountain West's only academic healthcare system, combining excellence in patient care, the latest in medical research, and teaching to provide leading-edge medicine in a caring and personal setting. The system provides care for residents of Utah and five surrounding states in a referral area encompassing more than 10 percent of the continental U.S. University of Utah Health is consistently ranked among U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospitals, and its academic partners at the University of Utah School of Medicine and Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Health are internationally regarded research and teaching institutions.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Give physicians the ability to reach one another quickly and easily via integration with existing communication systems
- Securely and reliably deliver large volumes of critical messages, including code alerts, patient updates, and consult requests, to enhance patient care
- Escalate critical messages and log all communications in an audit trail

SOLUTION

- Spok Mobile® secure texting solution

RESULTS

- Improved communication among caregivers, enhancing their ability to deliver excellent patient care
- Gained buy-in from residents to use Spok Mobile as their go-to communication choice
- Increased assurance of delivery and receipt of critical messages
- Boosted provider satisfaction

"We needed a solution we could integrate into our workflows that was cost-effective, easy to implement, and more importantly, easy for our clinicians to use. Spok was the best fit," explained Dr. Strong.

University of Utah Health rolled out Spok Mobile system-wide in June 2013, and began offering it to medical residents during orientation one year later. It was a hit: More than 50 percent of incoming residents and students chose Spok Mobile. Today, University of Utah Health has nearly 800 active Spok Mobile users, with plans for additional licenses.

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THE RESULTS

Since implementing Spok Mobile across the system, University of Utah Health has seen tremendous results, including better, more timely communication among caregivers, greater clinician satisfaction (one device), as well as security and reliability. These benefits can be seen in each area of the health system: In the contact center, Spok Mobile helped University of Utah Healthprovide better patient communication. Instead of putting callers on hold, operators can page patient information directly and securely to the provider who is on call. While still on the call with the patient, operators can confirm the provider received the page and inform the patient when the provider will be calling them back if they are unavailable at that moment.

Everyone on University of Utah Healths Emergency Management team relies on Spok Mobile for its critical communications, and the solution proved its worth during a recent incident when there was a suspected bomb on campus. Spok Mobile enabled University of Utah Health's telecom dispatcher to quickly and securely communicate with the emergency management director, allowing the director to send detailed steps of action and manage the emergency response to the situation while still participating in the virtual command center.

University of Utah Health's STEMI (ST Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction) team was able to reduce the average notification time with Spok Mobile as well. Now, team members can confirm availability through Spok Mobile instead of wasting valuable time waiting to get through to the operator. The ability to quickly and easily dial numbers directly from the app has also improved the communication process for team members.

Yet another example of improved communications with Spok Mobile is University of Utah Health's hospitalist team, which uses it to communicate with all residents and interns. They like that it allows for long messages if details are warranted, as well as the ability to securely address patient care issues with residents regardless of location. These better workflows with longer messages simplify prioritization.

Overall, Spok Mobile has improved communication for clinicians and staff throughout the system, streamlining their workflows and quickly and securely giving them the information they need to provide the best care for patients.

"The app is really selling itself now because we are using it so much and people have really adopted it," said Dr. Strong. "We believe we achieved these results because of Spok."

THE FUTURE

University of Utah Health has big plans for Spok Mobile in its communications future. Its next project is to replace 500 nursing Wi-Fi phones with Spok Mobile, which will allow interaction with University of Utah Health's electronic medical record (EMR), nurse call, and patient monitoring systems. They are also planning rollouts to other groups that have asked to participate based on positive word of mouth, such as pharmacy, respiratory, and physical and occupational therapy.

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