

VCU HEALTH



The challenge

VCU Health's dedication to patients and willingness to try new approaches are encapsulated perfectly in their motto: We preserve and restore health for all people of Virginia and beyond through innovation in service, research, and education.

Establishing effective clinical communications is a key aspect of ensuring this philosophy is carried out around the clock—on patient floors, in the contact center, and everywhere in between. However, this growing organization began to pinpoint difficulties they knew could only be resolved if they considered the entire enterprise when looking for the right technology.

According to Don Smith, VCU Health's communications operations manager, the health system was struggling with inefficient workflows when it came to clinician communication. This impacted not only physicians and nurses, but also other care team members and contact center agents. "We were looking to make messaging easier to self-dispatch and take call volume away from our agents to allow them to give a higher level of customer service," he said. This was important for a team processing 7,100 calls and 15,500 pages every day.

Clinicians were also frustrated by delayed messages and the inability to reach one another easily for necessary patient care communications. "Coordination of care and collaboration across disciplines and across specialties is critically important, particularly for people with complex health problems," said Peter Boling, MD. His colleague, Sean McKenna, MD, added, "There are so many moving parts for the care of any one patient that to keep up with all of it is the challenge."

The solution

VCU Health turned to Spok, its health IT partner of 20 years, to resolve these emerging trouble spots in their enterprise-wide communication. The solution: an integrated technology approach that touched all areas. "Spok has been a terrific partner in solving our communication challenges because it's been able to be at every point of communication where we've needed them," McKenna said.

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Sean McKenna, MD
Interim CMIO, VCU Health

Overview

VCU Health, which includes Virginia Commonwealth University's medical campus, is a comprehensive academic medical center located in Richmond, Virginia. The 789-bed facility encompasses five health sciences schools and offers more than 200 specialty areas such as multidisciplinary centers for cancer, cardiology, neurosurgery, and transplantation. It is the only Level I trauma center in the region verified in burn, pediatric, and adult trauma care.

Industry

Healthcare

Business drivers

- Support secure, HIPAA-compliant messaging for physicians and clinical staff to improve care coordination
- Simplify contact center communications through a consolidated space

Solution

- Spok Care Connect®

Results

- Reduced average call-handling time by 15%
- Faster, easier communication for clinicians
- Alleviated clinician burnout
- Simplified operations by consolidating contact centers into a centralized location
- Reduced costs by bringing the answering service in house

CASE STUDY

Now, the health system leverages the latest options for secure messaging across smartphones, pagers, and computers, as well as contact center technology that supports a single, centralized location for 225 agents.

VCU Health's EHR system has also been integrated with its communication workflows to encompass the broader care team, which is essential for quickly sharing and acting on patient test results and changes in vitals status.

"When vital signs don't look as good as what we like, we have automatic alerts to a specific team of clinicians," said Stacy White, nurse manager of Telepage and Service Response for VCU Health. "These providers no longer have to stop what they're doing to go to a phone or computer and figure out who they need to contact. They have something at their fingertips where they can connect with someone immediately," she said.

The results

Spok solutions have had a far-reaching impact that extends from clinicians and contact center agents to patients. Not only can time-sensitive patient alerts reach the care team quickly, but clinicians can also interact with ease, and the contact center is far more efficient. In fact, the success of VCU Health's project led it to be named a Spok Innovation Award Winner.

"Spok has allowed us to grow our contact centers and add services and a level of customer service that we haven't been able to do before," Smith said. "We've been able to drop our call-handling time by 15%. On the messaging end, we're able to integrate with our EHR system to automate messages, critical test results, and critical patient conditions."

"It's certainly the case around VCU Medical Center that physicians of all ages and years of experience have moved over to using Spok as a means of secure communication," Boling said. White adds that clinicians can now reach one another more easily. "Because of Spok and our partnership, we are now able to get in touch with the provider who's taking care of our patients. It gives us as clinicians more time to be with our patients."

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Don Smith
Communications Operations
Manager, VCU Health

We have to make sure that those people we partner with, those organizations such as Spok, believe in the same mission.

And when that happens, **patient safety wins** every time.

Stacy White, RN
Nurse Manager of Telepage and
Service Response, VCU Health

Another perk is that the technology has greatly alleviated clinician burnout. "It helps them fulfill their mission of being the absolute best they can be and bring health and wholeness back to our community," White said.

Every day, Spok helps VCU Health deliver on its patient promises. "For anyone who truly wants to do what's best for the patient, we have to make sure that those people we partner with, those organizations such as Spok, believe in the same mission. And when that happens, patient safety wins every time," White said.