VHC HEALTH

THE CHALLENGE

VHC Health and Spok first partnered in 2018 when the healthcare system embarked on a transformational, organizational initiative to replace a patchwork of disparate technology systems that weren't working well together and were creating barriers to interoperability. The project began with VHC Health's rollout of a new EHR (Epic) and subsequent post-implementation optimization. Interoperability post Epic go-live became the number one challenge for VHC Health. After evaluating, their communication systems, VHC Health realized they needed something that could:

1. Better integrate with Epic and other hospital systems

2. Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of their technology in a way that would enable better, more streamlined workflows for everyone in the organization

3. Help improve patient safety

They soon realized that most clinical communication and collaboration (CC&C) vendors only offered one piece of the communication puzzle. "We shopped around for that special company to help us achieve our goal", said Isaac Appiah, Director of Communications at VHC Health. "The only company or vendor that had the means or technology to help us achieve that was Spok."
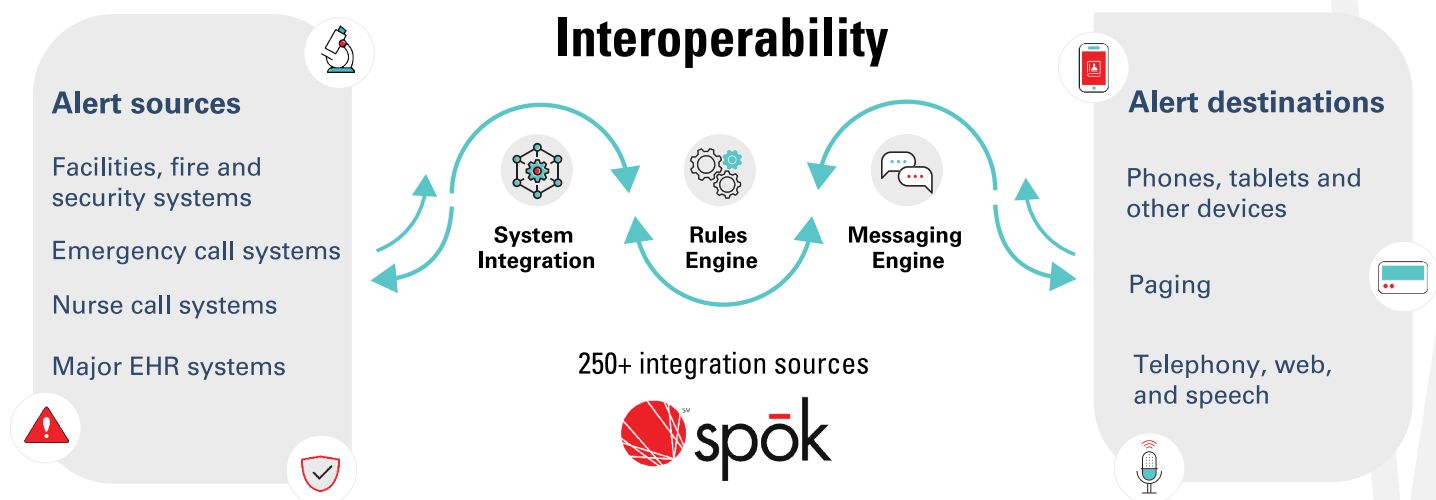
OVERVIEW

VHC Health® is a not-for-profit, 537-bed health system serving the Washington D.C., metropolitan area. Anchored by a nationally recognized top teaching hospital, VHC Health delivers high-quality, patient-centered care using advanced technology. With a growing network of primary and specialty care locations, VHC Health makes healthcare more accessible to the community and is consistently recognized as a leading health system in Virginia, earning numerous awards and proudly holding the Magnet® designation for nursing excellence.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Better integrate with Epic and other hospital systems

- Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of their technology in a way that would enable better, more streamlined workflows for everyone in the organization

- Help improve patient safety

Interoperability

Alert sources

Facilities, fire and security systems

Emergency call systems

Nurse call systems

Major EHR systems

System Integration

Rules Engine

Messaging Engine

250+ integration sources

Alert destinations

Phones, tablets and other devices

Paging

Telephony, web, and speech

THE SOLUTION

In January 2019, VHC Health transitioned to the Spok Care Connect® platform to accompany their new Epic EHR integration and modernize their communication processes. Specifically, VHC Health leverages the MediCall® console, WebXchange, for its centralized directory and on-call scheduling, Spok Mobile® and paging options, and in 2024 implemented Spok Voice Connect® for interactive speech technology. Now, "Everything runs smoothly because of that great integration of all those different systems in the hospital", said Appiah.

The VHC Health team particularly values the following capabilities:

24/7 call center operations: Most patients' first contact with VHC Health is through an operator or communications specialist who handles patient information and facilitates both inbound and outbound call transfers. They also monitor the hospital's emergency phone line around the clock, ensuring critical communications are never missed. Additionally, they assist employees, patients, and family members in making outbound calls related to updates on care, appointments, and follow-ups—providing seamless support for essential interactions.

Monitor emergency systems/alerts: VHC Health operators handle all critical emergency alerts, including fire alarms, ensuring rapid team notification, event tracking, and reporting.

Paging options: Spok provides versatile paging and message delivery options, including the HIPAA-compliant Spok Mobile application, standard and encrypted pagers, SMS or text, email, and fax—ensuring secure and efficient communication across multiple platforms. Spok Mobile integrates seamlessly with systems like Epic, protects patient information, and enables messaging with anyone in the VHC Health directory, enhancing and safeguarding communication.

Answering service: Using MediCall, the contact center supports the organization's after-hours operations by managing calls for VHC Health providers and over 40 private practices in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. It ensures that patient inquiries, appointment requests, and urgent messages are promptly addressed outside of regular office hours, maintaining seamless communication and enhancing patient care even when practices are closed. This capability further aligns with VHC Health's mission and vision statements: "To be the best health system" and "To serve the healthcare needs of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area."

SOLUTION
Spok Care Connect® platform to accompany the EHR and modernize communication processes
- MediCall®
- WebXchange (directory/on-call scheduling)
- Spok Mobile®
- Paging
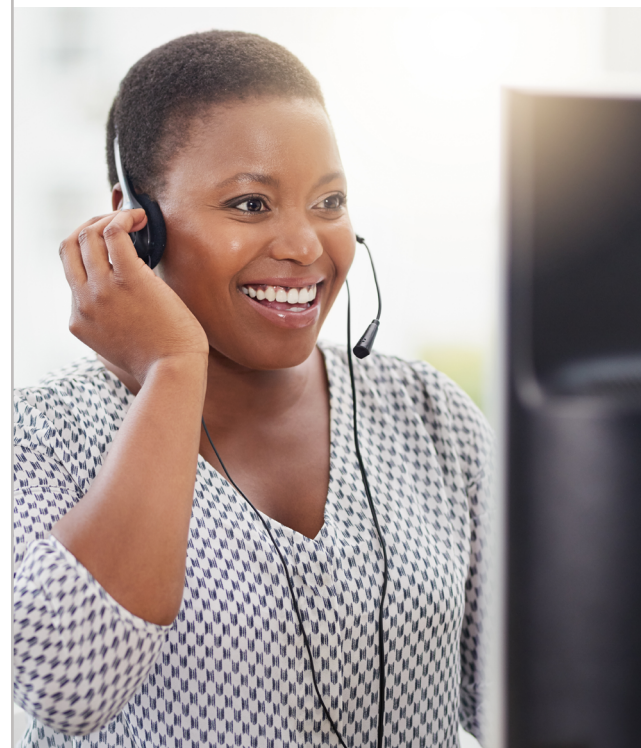- Spok Voice Connect® (new in 2024)

RESULTS
Monthly communication metrics:
- 483,727 calls per month
- 397,707 messages (via Spok Mobile and SMS pages) per month
- 11,830 average monthly web hits

Emergency code pages:
- Code blue—315
- Code red—207
- Code STEMI—665
- Trauma (alert, modified, & full) – 3,023
- NICU team/STAT – 2,538

THE RESULTS

The solution has significantly improved customer experiences, achieving:

Monthly communication metrics:

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> "Our partnership with Spok has been amazing. With their help, we have great interactions with our communication systems. They have great customer support and are always willing to listen and work with you to achieve your goals."
>
> Isaac Appiah,
> **Director of Communications
> at VHC Health**

What's next for VHC Health? In October 2024, they implemented Spok Voice Connect to enhance the organization's call handling and communication efficiency. Using interactive voice response (IVR) technology, Spok Voice Connect processes routine calls and transfers without operator assistance. An automated attendant maintains a professional tone that is consistent with the VHC Health brand. It also automates paging and messaging functions while being continuously finetuned for optimal performance. This solution allows VHC Health to manage higher call volumes, improve productivity, and enhance professionalism. By alleviating operator stress and reducing internal dial-zero calls, operators can focus on other client-centered tasks, ensuring better overall service.

In late 2024, VHC Health also upgraded their Spok pagers to the GenA® pagers: a next-generation alphanumeric paging device with a modern design, robust security features, and dependable performance to support effective communication in critical scenarios.

spok.com