

VAIL HEALTH

THE CHALLENGE

Clinical and IT leaders at Vail Health knew there had to be a better way to communicate than the status quo. Like many hospitals and health systems, communication had become fragmented and manual, which could lead to communication delays or breakdowns.

For example, clinicians had to get contact information and on-call schedules from a piece of paper that would often have handwritten updates on it. Additional updates would be communicated via phone call or text message, so each department would have a different understanding of who was on call.

"We had paper copies. We had Rolodexes. We had sticky notes on walls, and it just wasn't effective. Training for new staff was a barrier," explains Ryan Kolczak, IT manager at Vail Health.

Vail Health clinicians were also relying on multiple, disparate solutions to communicate, and some were computer-only. Clinicians don't live at their desks—they're with patients, and the Vail team wanted to provide a single solution that could notify them of patient events and other important information and facilitate care team conversations, wherever they might be.

"Our doctors and nurses don't want to have two or three different applications, or places to go find notices and find information," says Darrell Messersmith, CMIO and CIO at Vail Health. "If there's something that's important, they want to have that routed to them on a device that they're carrying with them, and they want that message to come at the right place, at the right time, to the right person."

In 2017, Messersmith and Kolczak began to research solutions that could solve all of these communication challenges by integrating information systems, creating a more efficient call center, sending emergency notifications and alerts to clinicians, and empowering staff to collaborate via secure, HIPAA-compliant messaging.



OVERVIEW

Vail Health is a nonprofit community health care system with 12 locations across west-central Colorado, approximately 100 miles west of Denver. The health system includes a 56-bed community hospital, Shaw Cancer Center, Howard Head Sports Medicine, two urgent care clinics, and medical centers and clinics throughout Eagle and Summit counties. Howard Head Sports Medicine is the Official Medical Provider for world-class athletes, including the U.S. Ski, Snowboarding, Free Skiing, and USA Climbing teams.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Establish a single source of truth for contact details and scheduling
- Introduce one platform for all clinical communication, and improve patient care by sharing real-time, actionable information and facilitating ongoing care team conversations
- Improve emergency response times with the ability to send mass notifications to all staff or select groups

SOLUTION

- Spok® Care Connect Platform

RESULTS

- Reduced average time to reach hospitalists by 50 percent
- Improved accuracy of switchboard call transfers from 97 to 99 percent
- Cut time to train new switchboard staff by 70 percent (two weeks to three days)



CASE STUDY

They quickly concluded the answer was not more point solutions—they wanted to reduce the number of applications clinicians used on the job and integrate systems using an enterprise-wide approach.

THE SOLUTION

Messersmith led the organization in pursuing an enterprise communication solution to integrate with their EHR and other hospital systems and scale with them for growth—Vail Health is in the midst of a 5-year, \$190 million plan to remake Vail Health Hospital.

After months of research, Messersmith and team concluded that Spok Care Connect was the “clear choice” to standardize their communications on a single platform, streamline workflows and enhance care team collaboration, and support their mission to deliver superior care with compassion.

The unified platform replaced several inefficient methods of communication. It introduced to Vail Health care teams secure messaging that is designed for healthcare workflows. With Spok Care Connect, physicians, nurses, and all members of the care team (both clinical and nonclinical roles) have real-time mobile access to current contact details and preferences, schedules, patient information, and care team conversations, on their mobile device of choice. They can also receive alerts from clinical systems, such as nurse call and patient monitoring, and emergency notifications that require staff to respond to a critical code or trauma activation.

“Spok makes it easy for clinicians to find the information they need quickly and eliminates unnecessary phone tag and confusion when trying to reach care team members,” said Cassie Dirks, BSCN, RN, CCRN, director of the Patient Care Unit, Intensive Care Unit, and Cardiac Catheterization Lab at Vail Health. “It allows my team to spend more time with patients, while having full awareness of what is going on with other patients on the floor.”

THE RESULTS

While Vail Health is still in the process of expanding use of the Spok Care Connect platform through its departments and its contact center, the initial results have been highly encouraging. On the clinical side, they’ve been able to cut the average time to reach hospitalists by 50 percent. At the Vail Health contact center, they’ve improved the accuracy of switchboard staff to an astounding 99 percent (up from 97 percent) and slashed the time to train new staff from two weeks to three days.

These impressive results and Vail Health leadership’s firm belief in the value of a single platform for communication led Vail Health to become a member of the Spok innovation partner alliance, which allows them to work closely with the Spok Development and Product Management teams and significantly contribute to the development of the next evolution of Spok Care Connect, a first-of-its-kind cloud-native enterprise communication platform.

“Having a single vendor, a single platform is much more efficient for us,” says Messersmith. “We don’t have to support multiple platforms, and our nurses and doctors will get their notices and their communication in one application, in one place.”

“Clinicians want that message to come at the right place, at the right time, to the right person.”

Darrell Messersmith
CMIO and CIO

