THREE WAYS MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS CAN SIMPLIFY A NURSE'S LIFE

A LOOK AT COMMON NURSING WORKFLOWS

Nursing is a tough job that is constantly evolving. From the days when nurses counted drips per minute when hanging an IV bag, technology has changed a lot of workflows. And there is still room to improve many common processes. In this eBrief we look at using communication and mobile devices to simplify three specific workflows — telemetry monitoring, nurse call response, and preventing patient falls.

NOTIFICATION WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT

In many units, telemetry war rooms are staffed with a technician to simultaneously monitor multiple patients. When a change in the patient's heart rhythm triggers an alarm, the monitor tech has to look up which nurse is assigned to that room and determine what type of device he or she is carrying. Then the technician must dial the number or send a text-based message and hope the nurse is available to answer. If the assigned nurse is unable to go check on the patient immediately, the tech has to repeat the ID and dial process for an escalation contact.

A technology solution can easily streamline this process by replacing many of the manual steps. With software, alarm notifications can trigger a call directly to the telemetry tech's phone, prompting him or her to look at that patient's monitor and confirm a true alarm (versus a false positive). If the alarm is clearly the result of motion artifact, the tech can accept the alert and not disrupt the nurse. For immediately actionable alerts, triggering the tech's phone allows him or her to hit just one button (decline) to forward the notice directly to that patient's nurse. The nurse can still decline the alert if he or she is busy and the software quickly escalates the notice to another care provider.
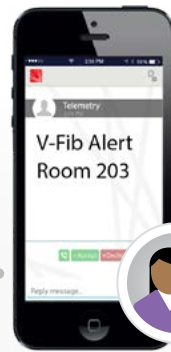
With communication software this workflow delivers notifications with one button, saving additional steps and precious time. It also helps reduce alarm fatigue because nurses aren't receiving as many false positives.

Actionable alert for room 203 sounds in the telemetry room

With one button, telemetry tech forwards alarm to patient's nurse

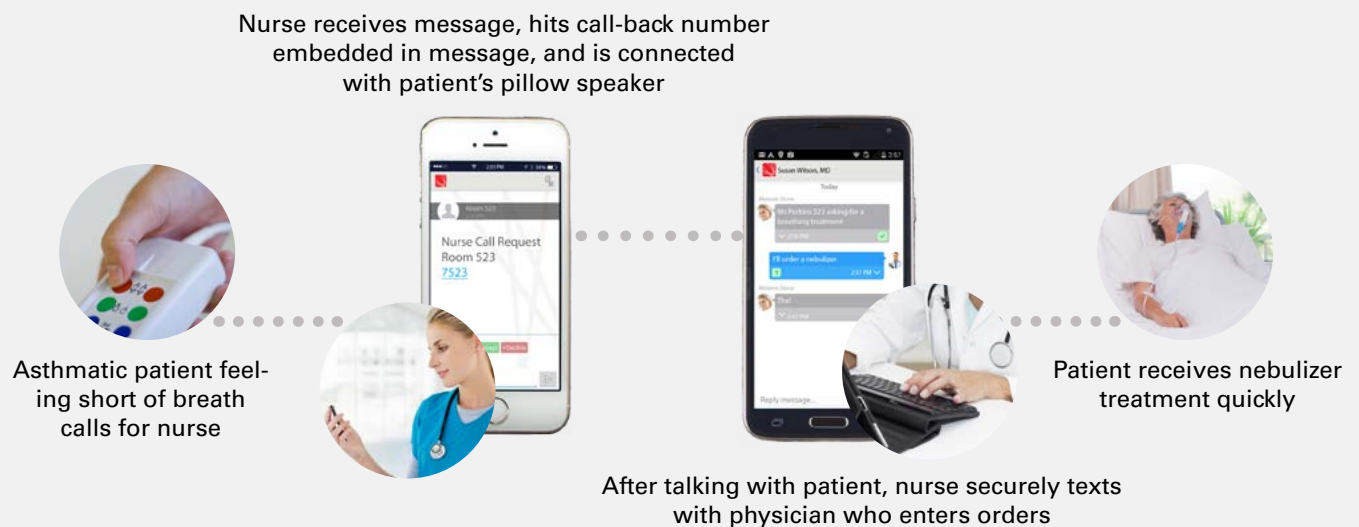Nurse receives alarm on mobile device; accepts alert, immediately triages patient, and launches a Code Blue

Coordinated, life-saving treatment is delivered to the patient quickly

ANSWERING PATIENT CALLS

Another important part of a nurse's shift is responding to patient needs. When a patient calls for assistance, his or her call is often routed to a nursing console on the unit. With unit secretaries now wearing multiple hats and not always staffing the console, the call might go unanswered for several minutes. When someone does respond and asks the patient what his or her need is, it then takes additional time to track down either the nurse or a CNA (certified nursing assistant) to fulfill the request.
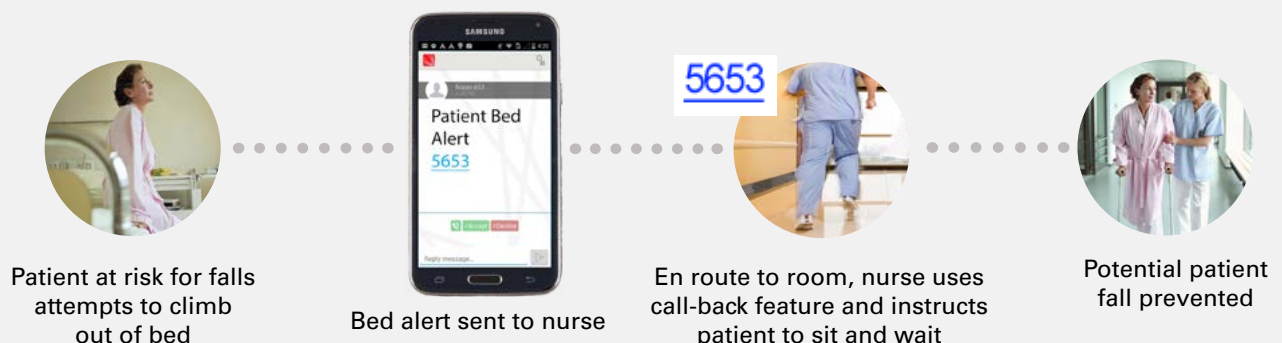
Software helps by circumventing that wait and triage time at the unit's central desk. It connects a patient directly to the caregiver on his or her mobile device, which could be a tablet, smartphone, voice badge, Wi-Fi phone, etc. Nurses who use this technology value being able to call right back to the room from their devices and speak directly with the patient because they can instantly triage and provide more efficient responses. Nurses can collect supplies or medications en route to the patient's room, for example.

Additionally, for situations when the nurse is busy with another patient and either declines the call or cannot respond to it, technology can automatically forward the notification to the next available staff member. Both patients and nurses are happier with a faster and more efficient nurse call answering process.

Nurse receives message, hits call-back number embedded in message, and is connected with patient's pillow speaker

Asthmatic patient feeling short of breath calls for nurse

After talking with patient, nurse securely texts with physician who enters orders

Patient receives nebulizer treatment quickly

PREVENTING PATIENT FALLS

Being able to call a patient's room directly is also an advantage in preventing patient falls. For patients at risk, beds are programmed to sound an alarm when the weight changes because the patient is no longer on the bed. This noise alerts care providers in the vicinity to get to the room and attend the patient immediately to keep him or her from falling. Technology assists in this process by sending the bed alert to a group of unit staff on their mobile devices, from which a nurse in transit to the room can hit the call-back feature and instruct the patient to sit back down again. The patient will often comply, especially if he or she is confused from anesthesia, giving the provider additional time to get into the room.

Patient at risk for falls attempts to climb out of bed

Bed alert sent to nurse

En route to room, nurse uses call-back feature and instructs patient to sit and wait

Potential patient fall prevented

Of the 25 hospital-related questions on the HCAHPS survey, several questions ask about staff responsiveness to calls for assistance, and one about quiet time:

During this hospital stay, after you pressed the call button, how often did you get help as soon as you wanted it?

During this hospital stay, how often was the area around your room quiet at night?

How often did you get help in getting to the bathroom or in using a bedpan as soon as you wanted?

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