



Patients profit when nurses use notification



Central New York's Crouse Hospital has found a way to fill open staffing positions quickly, freeing nurses to spend more time on patient care.

Customer Profile:

Crouse Hospital is a not-for-profit, acute-care hospital with the mission to provide the best inpatient care and to promote community health.

Problem:

Staffing changes with a fluctuating patient load were cumbersome, time consuming and increasingly inefficient.

Solution:

Using a mass notification solution from MIR3, nurses have freed administrative time to spend more quality time with patients.

Benefit:

Patients are receiving improved care, staffing issues are quickly resolved and the hospital system is saving time and money.

MIR3 Partner:

BroadBlast, Inc., authorized reseller of leading incident management, mass notification and emergency alert systems.

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The hospital environment

No matter what's going on outside the building, once you walk through the doors of a hospital the most important thing becomes patient care. When outside distractions threaten to interfere with that care, all efforts must be focused on regaining hospital equilibrium and keeping systems humming smoothly.

The Problem: Managing the ratio of staff to patient

Crouse Hospital's 5 South Irving medical/surgical unit employs 49 registered nurses, 19 nursing assistants, three health unit coordinators and one ambulator. With an average daily census of 39 patients and a bed capacity of 41, the staff care for roughly 10,500 patients annually.

Before adopting a notification system, when hospital staff called in sick and more help was needed, a nurse would have to step a way from patients and start dialing the phone, looking for substitutes. To find a substitute with all the right skills took at least 45 minutes and sometimes as long as two hours. That's two hours that could be better spent with patients.

The Solution: Intelligent Notification

As the supervisor of telecommunications for Crouse Hospital, Christopher Hines is responsible for processing over a million calls per month along with 4,500 phones, voicemails, and a conference bridge. When he had to fulfill a state mandate for an emergency notification system, he worked closely with his technology partner, BroadBlast Inc., and quickly got Intelligent Notification up and running.

Once the notification system was installed, Christopher pulled together a multi-department team to come up with creative ways to use the technology to streamline all sorts of processes. When it was explained to the nursing staff that Intelligent Notification could easily send an alert to many people on a variety of communication devices, reaching anyone on staff no matter where they happened to be, they shared an idea with Hines. If they could use the notification solution to call for substitute nurses, it could save them over an hour every day, and they could get back to doing what they do best—caring for patients. After a short trial period, the new way of calling for substitute staff has become a way of life at Crouse, and patients are reaping the benefits.

Nurses like the system because everyone gets the message at the same time, so everyone gets an equal opportunity to pick up extra time. This is not only a more equitable way of calling for additional help, but satisfies union requirements as well.

As nurse manager Laurie Fegley, RN, BSN says, "This is a great tool for nurses because when they are short staffed they don't really have time to make calls for additional help." This system allows them to focus more on patient care rather than on the phone. Staff appreciate that they get to choose how they want to receive the message, with younger staff members preferring text messages, and other staff members voice calls. The system does both, along with email if that is indicated. Plans include making notification available to supervisors as well.



"I showed one nurse how to dispatch a prepared notification and in less than a minute, she delivered her first important message."

—Christopher Hines, supervisor of telecommunications for Crouse Hospital

Crouse can now alert any number of staff, no matter where they are

Using Intelligent Notification, the hospital has reduced its dependence on time-intensive call lists and now can send out a call for substitutions to hundreds of nurses in just seconds. Noting that ease of use is one of its best features, Hines says, "I showed one nurse how to dispatch a prepared notification and in less than a minute she had delivered her first important message." He continued, "She already feels confident that she can send alerts whenever she needs to." Using the optional self-registration portal module, nurses can update their contact information at any time, increasing the chance that all data is clean and current.

The team is already dreaming up other ways to use Intelligent Notification throughout the hospital. The College of Nursing hopes to implement it soon to notify students of lockdowns in the case of foul weather or class cancellations. Hines plans to use it for other groups within Crouse, like the New York State designated regional referral center for perinatal and neonatal care (NICU) services, Reverse 911 for department disaster notifications, the Decon team, or even as a "code blue" alternative. He's in discussion with the physicians' board about using Intelligent Notification to alert physicians in the case of surgery room scheduling changes due to events like HVAC malfunctions. One efficient staff member suggested sending an alert when a parking lot is full to those who are just arriving for their shifts so that they know to choose an alternate. A volunteer coordinator plans to use it to warn volunteers when there are road closures or weather events that make it safer for them to stay at home that day.

How Crouse Hospital benefits from Intelligent Notification:

- **Quickly launch mass notifications** – Any authorized initiator can quickly launch a notification by logging on the Web, sending an email or making a phone call. They can use existing message templates or create new notifications and recipient groups in seconds, targeting and customizing notifications for specific departments or groups.
- **Reach thousands of recipients simultaneously** – Initiators can easily launch customized alerts to any hospital employee by mobile phone, SMS, landline, email, pager or BlackBerry—whatever mode works best for the recipient.
- **Receive useful, actionable responses** – Recipients can respond by voice or by written message, with responses displayed in real-time as well as archived for reporting and auditing.
- **Initiate instant conference calls** – If an administrator needs to get a group of nurses or physicians together on a quick conference call, they can simply press a key on their phones to join a call to share information, make urgent decisions and coordinate response efforts.

The bottom line

After two years of using the product, the staff at Crouse Hospital continues to come up with innovative ways to use the power of Intelligent Notification to gain efficiencies throughout the organization. The hospital not only has a reliable notification system in place when they need it, but they also have a technology tool that is as flexible and versatile as they need it to be. As time goes by, notification will become more common throughout the hospital system, helping Crouse Hospital offer the best possible patient-focused care and continue in their more than 120-year commitment of serving their community.

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