

‘Direct Connect’ at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center

Strengthens communications, workflow and satisfaction.

Communication is critical to a hospital’s staff workflow and productivity – and to each patient’s satisfaction. With that in mind, the 617-bed Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Connecticut, sought to integrate staff mobile devices with its Rauland Responder® 5 nurse call system to further improve communication, reduce overhead noise and gain more detailed reporting.

SITUATION

Following the installation of Responder 5 nurse call, the Hospital wanted to send staff communications from the Responder system to newly deployed Cisco™ Unified Wireless IP Phones. Saint Francis chose to implement Cisco phones based on their match to the Hospital’s demand for reliability, clarity of voice delivery, and durability.

Initially, the Hospital attempted to make the integration of phones and nurse call without the use of Direct Connect, but the move quickly left the floors with noise and delayed calls.

“We attempted to use middleware to connect the Cisco phones to Responder 5, and it was fraught with problems from day one,” said Angela Cotton, Clinical Budget Manager at Saint Francis.



As a result, there was a critical need to establish improved and instantaneous communications for both staff and patient satisfaction. Additionally, the initial integration was delivering only limited nurse call reporting details, and lacked a definition of patient call patterns, call history and staff behaviors needed for effective decision making.

“We were spending all of our time solving technical issues, and never had the chance to get into operations and reporting,” said Cotton.

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Angela Cotton, Clinical Budget Manager,
Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center



SOLUTION

Saint Francis has a long history of using Responder and looked to the local Rauland distributor, TPC Systems, for a workable solution. Saint Francis' goal was to improve patient-staff communication, reduce noise in the patient care area, and improve data for reporting.

The Hospital built a unique internal team approach amongst departments to address the relevant needs from Nursing, Information Technology, Informatics, Biomedical Engineering and Clinical Administration.

The Saint Francis team found that Responder's Direct Connect solution could easily integrate the Cisco mobile phones with the existing nurse call, allowing nursing to communicate with patients and each other more effectively. It also allows for communication to occur instantaneously and provides reliable integrated reporting.

"Without that teamwork and the local support from TPC, the technology deployment couldn't have worked," said Bob Zbuska, Director of Clinical Engineering.

"We were getting significant delays before using Direct Connect," said Cotton. "That's especially true for the staff members at the end of a line of code alerts. A lot of time could pass between the first person and the last on a group call. With Direct Connect, it's instantaneous to everyone. It's really streamlined the process."

"Basically, before Direct Connect the integration didn't work. Now, with the Direct Connect integration, it does," added Cotton.

Direct Connect is part of the Responder 5 system, which Saint Francis was already deploying following a thorough review of the latest technologies available. Saint Francis wanted a system that was reliable, self-sufficient, and enabled connectivity to mobile devices and EMR as well as delivering comprehensive reports on staff and patient call activity. The Hospital also required an open architecture and the ability to grow with expansions in phased upgrades.

Staff Terminal Integration

Additionally, the Hospital chose to place Responder Staff Terminals in rooms and departments as part of the nurse call/phone integration to further improve communication, workflow and satisfaction. Tailored to each patient care unit based on the environment and workflow, the staff terminals deliver communications, requests and updates to caregivers and ancillary staff with one-touch alerting. The touchscreens are open, expandable and bring the ability to affect clinical nurse workflow beyond simple signaling devices.



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BENEFITS

Following the Direct Connect integration, the Hospital is “seeing improved communication with patients, streamlined staff workflow, better availability of information, better reporting, quieter patient care units and strengthened teamwork,” according to Katherine Stanton, Saint Francis Clinical Informatics Database Analyst.

- **Reporting**

With the Direct Connect integration of phones and nurse call, Saint Francis was also able to see trends and reports for the first time that gave detailed data on staff workflow, patient calls and patterns for workloads and staff response times.

“In the past, we had no information, and we had no way to see detailed data we could use to make effective decisions,” noted Cotton. “With Responder’s Direct Connect and Reports Manager, we can now see patient call and nurse response patterns and productivity in an entirely new way.”

- **Noise**

“It’s amazing how much quieter the floors are now following the Responder/Cisco integration,” added Cotton. “When the floors are quieter, patients and staff are much more relaxed. The environment is improved just from a psychological point of view. And the calls are so clear now you can hear every word.”

- **Teamwork**

Implementing Direct Connect to integrate phones and nurse call is fostering better workflow and teamwork across all floors, said Stanton. “The systems are driving a team approach that relies on the calls and the escalations to deliver effective care of patients,” she said.

“And, by using Staff Terminals to communicate, we save 5, 10, 15 minutes of doctor and staff time. There’s no more need to go locate staff, or find them by phone or pager, just to coordinate time in the patient room with the doctors,” said Stanton. “It’s extremely important in helping us boost workflow and productivity with better communication.”

With a single button push on the terminal, a corridor light indicates patient status for fall risk or isolation to quickly and visually communicate a condition to all staff on the floor.

- **Satisfaction**

“Our patients love that they can instantly talk with a nurse from their bed to anywhere the staff is,” added Krystyna Demusz, Nursing Manager. “They’re reassured by the ability to reach their caregiver with no delay, and with the clarity of the call. Patient satisfaction has improved, and the units are much quieter.”



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Krystyna Demusz, Nursing Manager, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center

THE FUTURE

“Our goal with these deployments,” Cotton said, “is to have every floor in the Hospital set up with the same Responder 5, Staff Terminals and Cisco phone integration – and this is a big Hospital.”

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Katherine Stanton,
Clinical Information,
Saint Francis Hospital
and Medical Center



About Saint Francis

Saint Francis *Care* is an integrated healthcare delivery system in central Connecticut covering the continuum of patient needs, with access to more than 900 affiliated physicians, three hospital campuses, 12 medical offices and a variety of community clinics.



About Rauland

Rauland-Borg is a respected global leader in the design and delivery of advanced communications, workflow and life-safety solutions for hospitals worldwide, with installations in more than 4,000 hospitals in 40 countries.



About Responder

Responder® communication and nurse call systems help staff deliver the best possible patient care, with fast, direct patient-to-staff and staff-to-staff communication, flexible integrations, intelligent call routing and real-time reporting.



About TPC Systems

TPC is a full-service, certified distributor for Rauland-Borg in delivering design, installation and support for the Responder nurse call system. With 75 years experience, TPC covers the tri-state New York metro region with specialized systems' needs, integrations and communication technology.



Rauland-Borg Corporation

USA +1 800 752 7725
Fax +1 800 217 0977

Canada +1 905 607 2335
Fax +1 905 607 3554

Asia Pacific +65 64835750
Fax +65 64830926

Mid East & Africa +20 122 2154016
Fax +20 2 26703676

Europe +30 693 750 1168

Latin America +1 630 3479757
Fax +1 847 6328550