

COFFS HARBOUR HOSPITAL



THE CHALLENGE

The Coffs Harbour team was on a mission to find a solution that could link various clinical and alert systems—including nurse call, duress, security, fire, and building management—to mobile staff carrying wireless telephony. They wanted a solution that supported all the emerging healthcare and IT technologies. In addition, local, 24/7/365 technical support was key to ensuring the system was always functioning flawlessly to keep messages flowing and safety high for patients, staff, and visitors.

“When we were designing the hospital, we wanted to integrate a variety of systems with our phones,” said Ken Meale, Network Physical Resources Manager for Coffs Harbour Hospital. “There is incredible opportunity to link seemingly disparate systems in a hospital setting to the people who can take action based on the alarms and updates those systems continually provide. It was clearly the future of communications.”



THE SOLUTION

Meale and his team selected Spok Messenger. “This was the only solution available that could handle both the number of messages we needed to send and the type of information that needed to be sent. It also integrated easily with all of our existing alert and monitoring systems.”

“We use the software to send these alerts regarding medical emergencies, duress, nurse call, fire, and building management directly to the proper staff member carrying a mobile phone,” he said. When an alarm or event is raised by any of these systems, Spok Messenger enables the correct message to be delivered in seconds to the appropriate recipients. There are various groups set up to receive these calls depending on the situation. For example, defined groups of between two and 20 people must respond to calls ranging from patient duress, to changes in drug fridge temperatures, to heating and ventilation fluctuations.

OVERVIEW

The Coffs Harbour Health Campus opened in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Australia, in December 2001. The 240-bed base hospital provides level-5 facilities and numerous specialties to 100,000 people. One of the facility’s founding principles is to leverage state-of-the-art communication technologies to help staff provide care more efficiently.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Leverage the latest messaging technologies in a brand-new facility
- Provide high levels of care to patients with fast response and communications
- Make nurses more efficient
- Link various alert/alarm systems to mobile staff on wireless phones to speed action and lifesaving care

SOLUTION

Spok® Messenger Clinical Alerting

RESULTS

- Improved response times for alarms and alerts
- Fewer trips around the ward for nurses
- Ease of scalability when number of phones increased from 150 to 400

CASE STUDY

“[Spok] Messenger is an integral part of the way we do business and helps us in our mission to continually strengthen patient care and safety.”

Ken Meale
Network Physical Resources Manager



Every message is permanently logged in Spok Messenger, enabling the staff to track who has sent, received, and responded to notifications—and within what timeframe. This helps them manage and improve response times. “People need to be at the site of an emergency within three minutes of a call,” Meale said. “[Spok] Messenger helps us accomplish this and can assist in pinpointing areas for improvement.”

Of particular note is the integration with the nurse call system. Spok Messenger in conjunction with the nurse call system can assign each bed in the ward to the phone of the nurse on duty and can escalate to another staff member if the assigned nurse isn't able to respond to the initial call. “Patients are impressed by the ability to talk directly to their nurse from the pillow speaker without having to wait for that person to be paged from a central desk.”

THE RESULTS

Today, Spok Messenger is the heart of communication operations at Coffs Harbour. Although the facility started with 150 mobile phones, there are now 400 on the premises handling more than five thousand message exchanges daily. “With the heavy load of messages we send, we never would have managed with any other system. [Spok] Messenger has been bulletproof,” Meale said.

“The software has helped with the mobility aspect of our staff's daily lives. Nurses love it. Patients love it too because they're getting faster responses to their requests,” Meale said. “The management team is very pleased with how smoothly our communications flow. [Spok] Messenger is an integral part of the way we do business and helps us in our mission to continually strengthen patient care and safety.”

Meale continued, “We know we can rely on [Spok] Messenger. We probably have the most integrated system in Australia. A lot of other facilities are using Coffs Harbour as a model for how to make communications more efficient and enhance the patient experience.”

