

Wireless Telephones Enable Superior Patient Care and Maximum Mobility

USC University Hospital

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It's hard to believe that a world renowned healthcare and medical research facility such as University of Southern California University Hospital (USCUH) could improve on the care it provides patients and their families. But the hospital administration believed that they could. Recently, USCUH chose to implement Polycom's SpectraLink Wireless Telephones throughout the University Hospital medical center to give its doctors, nurses, and staff a highly effective and mobile communication solution to keep them in contact with patients, families, and each other anywhere they go in the facility. One of the key reasons the hospital chose to move to Wireless Telephones was to improve retention of nurses by giving them the best communication technology to provide better patient care and improve job satisfaction. Additionally, the Spectralink Wireless Telephones are integrated into the facility's wireless local area network (LAN), allowing the hospital the ability to migrate to a converged voice and data network. This change will eventually save USCUH a significant amount of future telecommunications dollars in an already tight healthcare market.

USCUH is a private, 293-bed research and teaching hospital staffed by the faculty of USC's renowned Keck School of Medicine. Located near downtown Los Angeles, USCUH offers top medical expertise and sophisticated technology, combined with a personalized approach to healthcare. The hospital has been using the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones since early 2002 and has deployed more than 275 handsets. Doctors, nurses, and administrative staff carry the Wireless Telephones in their pockets or clipped on their belts to be immediately accessible anywhere in the hospital.

Doctors and Nurses Both Agree on Wireless

From the nurses' perspective, Wireless Telephones help provide better and more immediate patient care. Patients no longer have to hit their nurse call button in the room and then wait for one of the station nurses to page and locate the patient's assigned caretaker. This process previously took upwards of five minutes to complete — which could mean a patient's well being was at risk. Now it's almost instantaneous. When asked what would be the key component that would help them do their jobs better, USCUH's nurses responded that if they had a Wireless Telephone they could quickly and more effectively attend to patients' needs.

Challenge

Provide better and more immediate patient care, and improve retention of nurses.

Solution

Polycom's SpectraLink Wireless Telephones operating on USCUH's Nortel Networks Meridian 2 PBX via Cisco's CallManager IP telephony application over Enterasys access points.

Result

Nurses are able to provide an increased level of care; Physicians are now easily accessible anywhere in the hospital.

"With the Wireless Telephones, our nurses feel they are better equipped to do their jobs and to ensure that patients needs come first and foremost."

Mary Kingsley,
Chief Nursing Officer at
USC University Hospital



TOGETHER, GREAT THINGS HAPPEN.

"It's important to ensure that our staff is always accessible to their patients and other staff — no matter where they are in the facility," said Mary Kingsley, chief nursing officer for USC University Hospital. "With the Wireless Telephones, our nurses feel they are better equipped to do their jobs and to ensure that patients needs come first and foremost. SpectraLink Wireless Telephones are almost considered a lifeline for the nursing staff and have helped us retain our top nurses. We often wonder how we did our jobs without them."

Not only have the nurses raved about the instant accessibility to patients, but so have the doctors that attend to patients at USCUIH. Previously, nurses would have to contact doctors on their pagers and wait while a doctor found an unused phone and returned the call. Meanwhile patients waited. Now, with the Wireless Telephones, nurses call each doctor directly on his or her wireless handset extension, eliminating the delay and frustration of a doctor having to find a phone. The handsets also provide a vibration feature that can silently alert the user to a call without disturbing the care environment, but still let them be aware if there is an emergency situation.

Said a physician based at USCUIH, "I carry my Wireless Telephone with me no matter where I go in the hospital. Whether I am making rounds, wrapping up paperwork, or taking a look at a patient's X-rays, I know I am accessible by the nursing staff and by my patients. I can now truly be in many different places in the hospital without sacrificing the care that I provide to my patients."

"Future-proofing" Telecommunications Resources

After looking at several wireless communications options, Polycom's SpectraLink Wireless Telephones were the obvious choice to integrate with USCUIH's Nortel Networks Meridian 2 PBX via Cisco's CallManager IP telephony application. Incoming calls are relayed over an 802.11b wireless LAN through a series of Enterasys access points installed throughout the hospital and routed directly to the durable, lightweight wireless handsets.

Because the Wireless Telephones are integrated into the hospital's existing communications backbone, the hospital will gain significant savings on future telecommunications resources as they eventually migrate data traffic to the network. Additionally, moving, adding, and changing telephone extensions are made easier for telecommunications managers by the quick transfer capabilities of Wireless telephone extensions for new and relocated hospital staff.

"SpectraLink Wireless Telephones give us the high level of communications that we need to provide our patients with the best possible care, while at the same time combining our data and voice traffic on a converged wireless network," said Jeff Lett, senior director of technology and telecom of Tenet Healthcare. "The cost savings are exponential and our IT staff now has a telecommunications network that is more manageable on a day-to-day basis. We can easily assign Wireless Telephone extensions quickly as new care staff is hired or moved to other facility areas."

Hospital telecommunications infrastructure is quite expensive to manage and hard to implement because of the sensitive hospital equipment environment and avoiding interference with critical care devices. Radio signals from standard cellular telephones can cause interference with sensitive electronics found in many biomedical devices used for patient care. However, SpectraLink Wireless Telephones operate with radio signals well below industry-accepted levels for hospital environments.

Wireless Part of Everyday Life

World-class patient care and cutting-edge medical research are hallmarks of USCUIH. At the same time, hospital staff and administration constantly seek to improve on this reputation and find new and innovative ways to better care for patients. Polycom's SpectraLink Wireless Telephones have made it possible for hospital staff to roam anywhere in the facility and maintain constant communication with their patients and other staff. Additionally, USCUIH has been able to maximize its investment in a wireless data network by adding voice communications on the same network. SpectraLink Wireless Telephones from Polycom have been a resounding success for USCUIH and will continue to become an integral part of how the physicians and nurses save lives and bring patients back to good health.

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