



## Not Your Mother's Communication Platform

### Using a Real-Time Clinical Communication Platform

It's no secret that today's healthcare organizations continue to struggle with outdated and inefficient communication technologies. Antiquated tools jeopardize patient safety, hamper productivity and workflows, and reduce revenue through patient leakage, readmissions and increased lengths of stay.

Overcoming these patient care and efficiency challenges requires physicians, nurses and other staff to have real-time access to information and collaboration **regardless of their physical location**. That accessibility must extend beyond phone calls to include secure messaging, schedule management, voice technology, and alert management collaboration tools.

The concept of real-time communication and collaboration is much different than the pieced-together approach many healthcare organizations take today, using non-integrated vendors whose systems only cover certain aspects of clinical communication, such as messaging or mobilized alerts.

Today, hospitals have more options than ever for improving clinical communication and care collaboration. But choosing the best platform from the sea of options can be a challenge.

### Unifying Clinical Communications

The concept of a unified communication platform – the integration of communication services such as instant messaging, voice, audio, web and videoconferencing across a business – is nothing new. And, given the wealth of evidence connecting ineffective clinical communication to poor outcomes and patient harm, the need for an enterprise communication solution in healthcare is clear.

Poor communication costs the U.S. healthcare system \$1.7 billion in malpractice costs and nearly 2,000 lives<sup>1</sup>

But the most effective unified communication platforms are developed keeping complex clinical workflows and patient privacy requirements of the healthcare environment top of mind.

Hospitals and health systems require a single platform to blanket the entire organization and beyond with fast, secure, accurate and coordinated communication. This communication platform must be at the center of all clinical systems in the hospital. Because patient care is closely tied to emergency alerts, lab results, electronic health records and more, all of those systems need to be accessible from the platform.

### Clinical Collaboration Today

The answer to the inefficient communication systems is the real-time clinical collaboration platform (RTCCP). The RTCCP takes the horizontal category of the unified communication platform and applies it vertically to the healthcare industry, providing the functionality that physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals require.

While secure messaging is a foundational element of any platform for care team collaboration, **the complex clinical workflows and unique needs of healthcare providers demand more robust communication and collaboration capabilities.** The ability to quickly gather critical teams, find a specialist, manage alerts, and access critical tests quickly are just some of the capabilities hospitals need in a RTCCP.

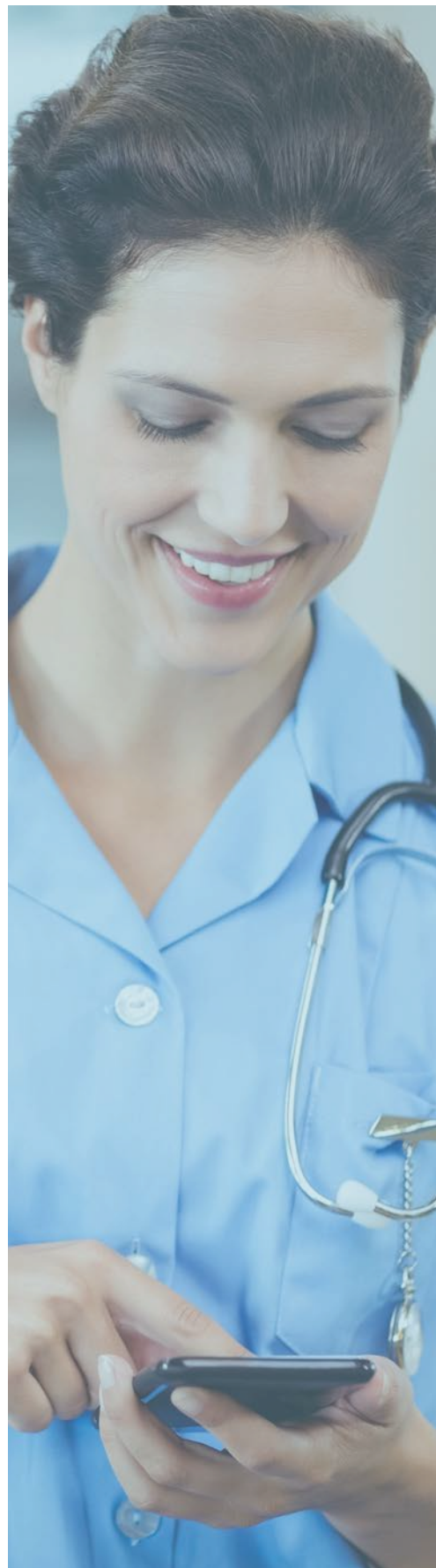
A cloud-based clinical communication platform that is scalable, interoperable and configurable without the dangers of customization is key. Health systems with multiple locations often have clinicians who are mobile or work at several different facilities. The communication platform they use to communicate with one another requires that they not be tethered to an on-premise system.

An effective RTCCP should have the following main components, which can, ideally, be deployed in phases over time:

#### MESSAGING

In the past, many hospitals and health systems have approached secure messaging as a stand-alone solution. However, today's clinical messaging solution must integrate effectively with established workflow protocols and critical hospital systems, such as lab and PACS results, alerts, and on-call physician scheduling.

**As the foundation of a clinical communication platform, secure messaging gives health systems fast and efficient communication**



**among care teams, preventing care delays and aligning physicians, nurses and clinicians in real-time, without risking the security of patient health information.** Ideally, the clinical messaging component offers a user experience similar to consumer messaging apps combined with healthcare-specific texting features. For example, with standard texting, messages are grouped together in one thread according to the contact. With secure clinical messaging, providers should be able to group message threads by patient or topic to ensure there is no confusion that could result in a medical error.

## SCHEDULE MANAGEMENT

Paper schedules and homegrown scheduling tools still reign at many hospitals. But last minute shift changes make these tools less than helpful, leading healthcare providers to spend vast amounts of time tracking down specialists, on-call physicians and other members of a patient's care team.

A system wide schedule management tool is a powerful component of a comprehensive clinical communication platform. It should allow users to build schedules directly inside the communication platform or import schedules from an organization's existing scheduling tool and offer the ability for real-time schedule changes. Scheduling systems where clinicians can each the correct physicians on-call, charge nurses, critical teams and patient care teams – and then interact with them in real time – provides the patients with more efficient care.

Anyone in the hospital should be able to use the RTCCP's scheduling module to view code, STEMI, stroke and other critical teams, and activate the appropriate group at the onset of an emergency. The ability of a clinical communication platform to call a code effectively eliminates the need for pagers.

## ALARM MANAGEMENT

Today's clinician is overwhelmed with notifications and alerts and can easily become desensitized, increasing the chances of missing a critical patient alert or making an error.

A clinical communication platform should consolidate the many alerts currently going to phones, pagers, nurses' stations and other places to one endpoint – the RTCCP. This functionality reduces ambient noise by replacing beeps and alarms with text messages. **The solution should deliver actionable alerts to the right clinicians, while differentiating alerts that are truly critical so that doctors and nurses can respond accordingly.**

## VOICE

Often the care team needs to go beyond messaging to voice communication. A clinical communication platform's voice module must have best of breed call quality and reliability. It should offer the flexibility to

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reported that nurses waste, on average, one hour per shift tracking down physicians for a response regarding patients<sup>2</sup>

connect to a health system's existing telephony infrastructure or the latest in voice technologies and provide the ability to make VoIP calls or convert text to voice.

In an environment where every second counts, these four components of a real-time clinical collaboration platform enable nurses, physicians and other staff to coordinate patient care across acute and ambulatory care settings seamlessly and efficiently. With all high-priority clinical communication coming and going from one secure central system, RTCC is a powerful tool to combat delayed care, costly readmissions and sentinel events, while improving patient and clinician satisfaction.

As mobile device use at the point of care continues to rise, it's never been easier for clinicians to consult with specialists; share patient information through texts, imaging and lab results to reduce response times; improve care transitions and throughput; and reduce discharge times through a RTCCP. Further, platforms that are that are cloud-based enable collaboration across organizational lines – a growing imperative as the shift toward value-based care continues.

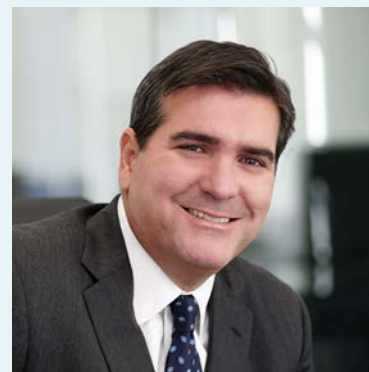
## Conclusion

When choosing a real-time clinical collaboration platform, health systems must consider their organizational needs as well as the potential to improve patient care. They should seek a vendor that has clinical communication as its primary focus and offers a comprehensive clinical communication platform that extends beyond simply a secure texting solution. A good partner will be involved in every step of the development process to ensure the platform integrates seamlessly into an organization's workflows and functions intuitively for physicians, nurses and staff.

<sup>1</sup> 2015 Malpractice Risks in Communications. CRICO Strategies' Comparative Benchmarking System/Harvard University. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Julia James, "Health Policy Brief: Patient Engagement," Health Affairs, February 14, 2013, accessed January 18, 2018, [https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue\\_briefs/2013/rwjf404446](https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2013/rwjf404446).

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