Hospital Case Study

Overview

Customer
Rice Memorial Hospital

Location
Willmar, Minn.

EMR Partner
Epic

Customer Profile
A Level 3 Trauma center located 100 miles west of Minneapolis/ St. Paul, Rice Memorial Hospital maintains 100 inpatient beds and a number of outpatient services. It also provides outreach services and serves as a regional referral center for hospitals and clinics in a 14-county area.

The Challenge:

With patient safety a priority, Rice Memorial sought to continue a solution that would improve overall staff workflow, provide physicians with real-time patient data, eliminate unnecessary overtime costs and work seamlessly as they transitioned to the Epic EMR.

Rice wanted a system that would provide the most accurate and up-to-date vital signs data available, thus eliminating instances of human error that can result from manual documentation process and delayed data entry. Prior to introducing the Connex EVD system, nurses were taking vital signs manually, often delaying data entry until the end of a shift, which in turn increased overtime costs. Nurses in the post-op unit were particularly interested in finding more accurate and efficient ways to take and record frequent vital signs from multiple patients over short periods of time. In addition, physicians routinely expressed concern that manual methods could result in having to track down the most current vital signs data and had potential for inaccurate patient information.

The conversion to Epic required significant effort for the nurses, and the hospital did not want to add tasks to nurses’ already heavy workload. So, the Rice Memorial team wanted to continue to utilize an automated process and eliminate unproductive documentation tasks.

The Solution:

Rice Memorial Hospital has a long-standing relationship with Welch Allyn and has been using its devices for years. Staff was familiar and confident with the Welch Allyn team, its products and its ability to provide innovative solutions.
The hospital began with a trial of the Welch Allyn Connex Vital Signs Monitor—one element of the overall Connex EVD system—and the nursing staff quickly responded positively to the device’s ease of use and the prospect of automated vital signs documentation.

After a brief trial of the device, the hospital began planning its rollout of the complete EVD system. This includes the Connex VM server, which provides end-to-end connectivity between individual devices and the Epic EMR. The hospital performed a phased implementation that focused on the post-op, medical-surgical and women’s health floors.

Staff members—particularly the post-op nurses—were impressed with two specific workflows of the Connex EVD: 1. the ability to capture and transcribe monitored vital signs readings with the push of a button; and 2. the ability to quickly and efficiently document spot check vital signs. The system made such an impression that nurses on other units not participating in the initial rollout were asking “When do we get this on our floor?” and “When is it our turn?” Physicians, too, were impressed with the accuracy of data made available using the Connex EVD.

The Benefits:

As Epic went live at Rice Memorial Hospital, the continued benefits of the Connex EVD became even more apparent, allowing providers immediate access to a steady stream of accurate vital signs and providing value to its new EMR as a source of accurate and up-to-date information. Nurses and physicians were impressed with the ability of the Welch Allyn Connex EVD to efficiently and accurately capture and record vital signs at the point of care. And, physicians also commented on the improvements in data accuracy and timeliness.

Rice acknowledged that changes in workflow—even those with clear benefits—presented challenges, especially to the nursing staff. Involving nurse managers from the beginning was key to success and promoted ownership by the entire nursing staff. While change is hard for nurses, they found that their processes were improved by strongly encouraging complete compliance with the new protocol.

One of the specific selling points was the immediate data transfer from the Connex VSM to Epic, which not only saved time at the bedside but reduced the need for nurses to stay after their shift to document patient data. This was a great benefit to Rice Memorial as a whole, as it reduced additional hours spent on documentation and subsequently decreased overtime.

“Implementing our new Epic EMR was stressful on everyone. Nurses were pleased that the Connex EVD...made their jobs easier.”

Kathy Dillon, MA, RN, Director of Information Management

Physicians at Rice Memorial also were pleased with the capability of the device to provide quick access to vitals, which gave them the data necessary to provide even better patient care and greatly reduced frustration in seeking out the most current vital signs information.

Rice Memorial now has expanded its deployment of Connex EVD system and had immediate requests for the device from other departments not included in the initial phase. Plans include inpatient behavioral health.

“Implementing our new Epic EMR was stressful on everyone, but Welch Allyn offered us leading-edge solutions for the emerging world of EMR-connected vital signs devices that made the whole process go much more smoothly,” said Kathy Dillon, MA, RN, Director of Information Management. “Nurses were pleased that the Connex EVD did not add to that stress but actually made their jobs easier. And, we couldn’t be more pleased with the feedback we’ve been getting from our physicians. Connex is truly helping us reap the rewards of our Epic conversion. We made a great choice.”