

IDSolutions

A clear vision of communications

The Challenge: A shortage of Healthcare specialists

Often, small community hospitals will not have the expertise of specialists on staff to handle complex stroke cases. Because stroke patients can greatly benefit from early treatment, it is imperative that strokes be identified and treated quickly. If a community hospital doesn't have a neurologist on staff, what can they do?

Founded in 2007, The StrokeCareNow Network (SCNN) began offering telemedicine as a way of bringing experts into smaller or rural community hospitals. When a patient is brought into the emergency department of a hospital exhibiting symptoms of a stroke, the on staff physician can quickly place a call into the SCNN and bring a specialist to assess the patient via video in a matter of minutes. Together, the on-staff physician and the specialist can decide on a plan of care for the patient, which often greatly improves the overall outcome for patients.



Vidyo in action at the hospital

This program was so successful that it quickly grew from just a few hospitals to a 25-hospital network that it is today. However, there have also been some growing pains. The home-grown video solution that was being used was beginning to become overwhelmed by the growth and SCNN needed a more robust and reliable solution to support the 2-way audio/video platform so vital for the emergent care of stroke. In addition, there was also a need to bring in the use of mobile devices such as tablet computers and smart phones, instead of having to depend on desktop solutions - so to communicate with specialists who were away from their desktop computers.

Mike GeRue, Board Member of the SCNN, and his team began the search to find a solution to meet their growing needs. As they began the search, they kept these main goals in mind:

- Neurology Coverage -that supports ongoing top-notch and expeditious care to patients who required Neurology consults.
- Reduced Transfers - keep patients in the local hospital if possible by supporting community hospital emergency physicians and staff with consultation with specialists via telemedicine. Transfer only patients who critically require a level of care available elsewhere.
- Mobile solutions - enhance accessibility with a mobile solution on handheld devices including tablet computers.
- Increase Treatment with TPA - greater use of TPA, a clot busting medication, to stroke patients within 3 hours of symptom onset in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for stroke patients.

“Some of our hospitals see 10 - 20 strokes a year. Others see 100 in a year. We want this solution to help give all patients quality care, no matter which hospital they go to initially,” said Mike.

IDSolutions

A clear vision of communications

The Solution: A flexible conferencing system from Vidyo

With a demo system provided by IDSolutions, SCNN began a feasibility study that allowed them to test the Vidyo solution in a variety of real-life scenarios and see if it would meet all of their requirements. “We tested the system for about a year. We were particularly interested in the difference between the mobile option vs. a cart based system,” Mike said, regarding the feasibility study.

The solution was tested with real-life patients, bringing specialists in to consult on their cases. Using iPads™ and a variety of other handheld devices, they were able to see patients with great clarity in real time, and able to assess their correct course of treatment for them based on their presentation of symptoms.

The data that was collected through the feasibility study was overwhelming. The Vidyo solution with its ability to connect with mobile devices would not only work, but was a superior choice to cart-based solutions. The team agreed to move forward with a full scale deployment of a Vidyo solution for their 25 hospital locations.

The Benefit: A measureable improvement in stroke care

With the new Vidyo solution, data indicates that stroke care has been greatly impacted for all hospitals in the network. Now, the SCNN is on track to make sure that ALL patients who are eligible to receive TPA can get it, potentially improving their recovery outcomes dramatically.

If doctors can assess a patient within 3 hours of symptom onset, TPA can be administered and then a patient can be transferred to a bigger hospital if needed - saving precious time. If they needed to wait for TPA administration until they arrived an hour or more could go by, potentially making them ineligible for TPA treatment. The faster a doctor can assess a patient’s condition, the better chance for a good outcome. They have even perfected their process so that the camera viewing the patient only needs to be moved one time for the consulting physician to get an overall view of the patient.

“We’ve even had a doctor pull her car to the side of the highway and take a call with her mobile device,” Mike said. “In the past, the doctor needed to be at their desktop. Now, they can be anywhere, saving critical minutes.”

SCNN has seen no resistance to the implementation, “Everyone was completely on board,” said Mike. The implementation went smoothly and there was very little learning curve for doctors when they began using the system. Patients and families are comfortable with the solution too. Knowing that they are getting the best care as fast as they can even with video makes families very comfortable.

In the future, there are many options for the Vidyo system to continue to impact care at SCNN and their hospitals. One idea is extending mobility option into EMS vehicles, so doctors can see patients even faster. Consultations for other neurological conditions, general hospital communications, in-home patient care and support for other tele-health initiatives beyond strokes are all areas where this system can have an impact moving forward.

For more information about the StrokeCareNow Network please visit: www.strokecarenow.com.