Mount Nittany Health Improves Clinical Workflows with Modern Scheduling

Overview

Mount Nittany Health is a five-star-rated healthcare system located in the heart of Pennsylvania. Originally a community hospital, the organization has expanded to include a medical center, physician group, children's advocacy center, and foundation. The Mount Nittany Medical Center is a 260-bed acute care facility that is nationally recognized for its excellence in patient safety and quality of care delivering medical, surgical, diagnostic, and community services. The Mount Nittany Physician Group serves the community with 170 healthcare providers in 30 specialties across 17 locations.

Mount Nittany Health's mission is to build stronger communities with healthier people. To achieve that goal, the medical center works with multiple groups and independent practices that serve the community. While this allows Mount Nittany to provide high levels of specialty care, it also presents additional challenges to managing complicated community and on-call schedules.

To solve these challenges and improve efficiency, Mount Nittany Health replaced its outdated scheduling system and inefficient processes with the TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform and TigerConnect Physician Scheduling. The new system improved

Building TigerConnect Roles between the office and on-call allows transparency and a predictable structure that makes sense to providers and allows a healthy work-life balance.

Amy Rea
Application Specialist at Mount Nittany Health

cross-department connections and scheduling transparency, increased physician and staff satisfaction, and enhanced communication and collaboration throughout the healthcare system. Using TigerConnect also allowed Mount Nittany to reduce costs and save valuable resources by eliminating pagers and reducing the amount of time spent creating and maintaining physician and staff schedules.

Challenge

Lack of standardization in communication and scheduling systems

Physician scheduling presented a significant challenge at Mount Nittany Health. A detailed analysis of their scheduling workflows revealed communication bottlenecks, discrepancies in schedules, and gaps in coverage.

"To say we were ignorant of many of the issues that plagued our on-call scheduling system would be an understatement," said Marissa Wickham, clinical informaticist and educator at Mount Nittany Health. "Chief among these issues was a lack of standardization, which was the cornerstone of a host of other issues."

Each floor of the hospital had its own contact lists for on-call physicians and every physician group had its own methods and formats of creating and sending schedules to the medical staff office. Any change to the schedule set off a cascade of phone calls and emails to the answering services, emergency department, and certain hospital floors that had their own version of the on-call list. Changes written on scraps of paper were shredded, eliminating any audit trail

of who was on-call for what specialty and when. "Practice managers would send the schedules by fax, email, or on the back of dinosaurs, and then also manually enter the same information into the systems of the various answering services being used," said Amy Rea, application specialist at Mount Nittany Health.

Although the medical center had a secure messaging system in place, providers were not happy with it and instead relied on pagers, emails, fax, and other communication methods. Sometimes, sensitive patient health information was shared in pager messages that were not HIPAA-compliant. Without a centralized scheduling system, inconsistencies and inaccuracies in oncall schedules and contact information resulted in providers being contacted when not on-call or being contacted by non-preferred methods.

Emergency department hospital admission was another area bogged down by these manual processes. Each hospital admission required the case manager to call multiple doctors to find out who was taking the next admission. They then had to manually create and send a message for each provider, which was time-consuming and inefficient.

Solution

TigerConnect streamlines connections and schedules

Mount Nittany Health adopted the TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform as its secure messaging system and TigerConnect Physician Scheduling to handle all its physician and on-call scheduling. Their priorities in choosing TigerConnect included its interfacing capabilities,

---

Saved
15k
by replacing on-call provider pagers with TigerConnect

Ranked
3
scheduling systems down to one

Saved
2-4
HOURS
every week by reducing time spent maintaining schedules

Eliminated
3-5
calls per admission, improving ED throughput

> *Although there were financial benefits to switching to Tigerconnect Physician Scheduling, we chose it because it was right for our physicians, timesaving for practice managers, provided transparency and success within TigerConnect, and made three scheduling systems into one.*
>
> **Marissa Wickham**
> Clinical Informaticist and Educator at Mount Nittany Health

patient communication and alarm management features, active directory and multi-organization integration, roles and team functionality, on-call scheduling, and its strong track record with HIPAA-compliant, secure communication.

"Building roles between the office and on-call allows transparency and a predictable structure that makes sense to providers and allows a healthy work-life balance," Rea said.

With TigerConnect, departments can create schedules three months at a time. Using the automated schedule assistant, they can assign an equal amount of on-call time for each provider throughout the year. Assigning roles expedites scheduling and ensures adequate time off. Additionally, any changes in the schedule are automatically reflected in the system in real time.

The implementation of TigerConnect Roles and Teams played a central role in transforming the way Mount Nittany Health handled ED hospital admissions and improved ED throughput. They created a hospital role for each hospitalist group who would handle admissions and consults, and an admission team was created for each group. When a patient needs to be admitted, the case manager simply activates the team message that automatically contacts everyone who needs to be notified.

"With this new process, we eliminated the need for any phone calls to be made," Wickham said. "If

the hospitalists taking admissions changed, the message assigned to that particular role travels with the role instead of being lost with the provider leaving for the day."

Results

Better workflows save time and money

Mount Nittany Health saw immediate success after its transition to TigerConnect. Clinical workflows improved with realistic, transparent, and accurate on-call schedules. By replacing their former multistep, analog scheduling process with a standardized, automated platform, they eliminated time spent maintaining on-call, office, and answering service schedules, saving staff two to four hours a week.

Provider satisfaction improved with the adoption of the new system. Providers were happier because it reduced overhead pages and made it easier to communicate and collaborate with other providers. Because physicians found it easier to communicate using TigerConnect, they were able to eliminate pagers altogether, resulting in $15,000 in annual savings.

Finally, Mount Nittany improved ED throughput by simplifying the admission processes, eliminating three to five calls per admission.

"Although there were financial benefits to switching to Tigerconnect Physician Scheduling, we chose

it because it was right for our physicians, timesaving for practice managers, provided transparency and success within TigerConnect, and made three scheduling systems into one," Wickham said.

Mount Nittany Health has plans for more implementations of TigerConnect. They want to use it to improve multi-organizational communication workflows with local air ambulance services to create faster, more efficient processes for communicating time-sensitive cases. They also plan to integrate scheduling and roles for their surgical services staff.

About TigerConnect

TigerConnect transforms healthcare with the industry's most widely adopted clinical collaboration platform – uniquely modernizing how doctors, nurses, care teams, patients, and data connect. With solutions spanning care communication, patient engagement, scheduling, alarm notifications, nurse call, and more, TigerConnect accelerates productivity, reduces costs, and improves patient outcomes, safely and securely. Trusted by more than 7,000 healthcare entities for user-friendly yet enterprise-ready solutions, TigerConnect delivers 99.995% verifiable uptime for more than 10 million messages each day.

Contact Us

To schedule a demo or learn more about how TigerConnect can improve clinical communication efficiency for your organization, **contact us.**