

Sharp Memorial Slashes ED-to-Admit Time with TigerConnect



Overview

Sharp Memorial Hospital is part of Sharp HealthCare, a highly regarded healthcare system in San Diego that has won prestigious awards for high-quality patient care. The organization operates four acute care hospitals and three specialty facilities. Sharp Memorial Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) is a 62-bed STEMI, Stroke, and Level 2 Trauma Center. The ED sees an average of 280 patients per day.

ED patients requiring admission often have complex needs requiring various physicians and specialists to coordinate care. The admission process for even a routine admission required several steps by multiple people which was an ineffective use of time and resources. Sharp identified a need to optimize efficiency, as they found that antiquated communication methods and inefficient workflows were contributing to unnecessary delays.

"It's essential to have an efficient and streamlined admission and discharge process," said Jessica Carlson, Sharp Memorial's Clinical Nursing Support Manager. "Long door-to-physician times can lead to poor patient outcomes, not to mention, poor patient satisfaction."



TigerConnect is a game changer. It has improved communication of important ED events after admissions occur. This all leads to improved patient safety.

Zachary Shinar, MD
Chief of Emergency Medicine
Sharp Memorial Hospital

Challenge

Optimize communication to accelerate care and create capacity

Sharp Memorial identified physician-to-physician communication as a bottleneck for ED throughput. Admitting a patient from the ED to inpatient care requires ED physician to hospitalist or intensivist handoff in order to move the patient.

This manual process was cumbersome for all involved. Once the ED physician decided to admit the patient, they would ask the clerk to page the admitting physician. The clerk would review the on-call scheduling system, determine who the admitting physician was, and call the operator. The operator would send a one-way notification with very limited information to the admitting physician. The admitting physician would have to look at the tiny screen on the pager, find a phone, and then dial the number on the pager display. With so little information, the admitting physician was unable to know if this admission would be a quick call or require a more in-depth conversation. This would often lead to a delay in the admission process until the admitting physician had time for the phone call.

When the admitting physician would call the ED clerk back, the clerk would then have to put the hospitalist on hold and go find the ED physician who was oftentimes with a patient. The clerk would interrupt the patient assessment to inform the ED physician that the admitting physician was on the phone on hold. The ED physician would leave the bedside to answer the phone and have a private conversation regarding the admission.

"If a patient requires a specialist, then we have to go through this inefficient workflow twice for one patient, and the ED physician must explain the story twice as well," Carlson said.

There were simply too many people, steps, and wasted time for all parties. At least 20 percent of the time, hospitalists took 15 to 20 minutes to return a page. If a consult was necessary, that often doubled response times.

Meanwhile, there are patients in the ED waiting room, potentially with life-threatening conditions in urgent need for an ED bed and an ED physician.

Solution

Secure, role-based communication via TigerConnect

Sharp Memorial needed a platform that could connect physicians, facilitate secure information sharing, and integrate with other tools such as on-call scheduling to ensure the right doctors were getting notified for admissions. Sharp Reese-Stealy Medical Group shared their success after implementing TigerConnect with Sharp Memorial physician leaders. Chief Operating Officer, Chris Walker, who worked with the ED physicians on improvement strategies agreed to conduct a trial of TigerConnect to determine if the platform would resolve some of the age-old conversations about communication barriers and admission delays.

Implementation involved a cross-functional team of clinicians, IT staff, and TigerConnect who got the solution up and running quickly and drove fast adoption. Most physicians were using TigerConnect within two months.

3.2
MINUTES

average response time for admit consults

72%

reduction in response time for admit consults

Reduced

ED

wait times and improved throughput

"The impact of TigerConnect has been dramatic," Carlson said. "We needed a platform that could do several things, and we were not expecting to find one solution that could do it all, and then some."

With the improved workflow, only two people need to be involved in the admissions process. The ED physician sends a message to the on-call physician, who is found automatically through the integration with the on-call scheduling system.

Results

72% decrease in response times for admission consults and improved productivity

Sharp Memorial's ED experienced a 72% reduction in response times for admit consults with an average response time of 3.2 minutes. This accelerated the admission process, decreased wait times for the patient, and improved ED bed availability for patients waiting to be seen by an ED physician.

Shift changes are managed automatically through the on-call scheduling integration. As shifts change, new physicians auto-populate in the TigerConnect system and role-based communication simply updates to the new on-call physician.

Productivity across departments also increased because the ED physicians were no longer waiting for a call back to initiate the admission process. With TigerConnect, the ED physician sends a message to the admitting physician about the patient case. The admitting physician sends a simple message back confirming the admission. Physicians are no longer getting pulled away from their patients and patient families to discuss another patient's case. If the patient condition changes while the patient is still in the ED, the ED physician can provide a simple update via a TigerConnect message to the admitting physician for awareness and action if indicated. All of the message content is archived and can easily be tracked and analyzed for feedback. Each message is time stamped for when the message was sent, delivered, and read.

Sharp Memorial has expanded TigerConnect to the Utilization Management Department to streamline and improve their workflow as well. This intervention has had an impact on hospital reimbursement. The workflow is time-sensitive and may require action if a patient needs to be converted to observation status or inpatient status. This improved communication pathway has reduced the number of times patients are not converted to the proper status within the established timeframe.

"TigerConnect is a game changer... a demonstrable improvement in efficiency. It provides a platform for better and faster communication," said Zachary Shinar, MD Chief of Emergency Medicine at Sharp Memorial Hospital. "It has improved communication of important ED events after admissions occur. It allows closed loop communication between multiple consultants and hospitalists. This all leads to improved patient safety."

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

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