

# Improving Emergency Department Experience for Patients and Physicians



## CHALLENGE:

Lack of direct clinical communication compromises patient experience and can drive up costs

For primary care physicians (PCPs), referring patients to the Emergency Department (ED) can be a time-consuming process. Many PCPs leave the communication in the hands of a staff member, or neglect to notify the ED to expect a patient. As a result, key patient information can sometimes get lost or omitted. WakeMed Health & Hospitals recognized that the lack of direct clinical communication could easily impact ED care decisions, which would increase patient wait times, decrease satisfaction and drive up costs for the patient.

## SOLUTION:

PH Connect gives physicians instant connection to the ED, streamlining arrival process and treatment plan

To address this challenge, WakeMed provided every PCP in the care community with the PH Connect mobile app, which allows for easy and secure transmission of Patient Health Information (PHI) directly to any of the system's emergency departments or urgent care locations.

"PH Connect is an easy way for me to communicate with the emergency department about patients in my office that need further evaluation there. I like that I get confirmation that my message has been read by a staff member of the ED. I am a big fan of PH Connect," says Brad Wasserman, MD, Oberlin Road Pediatrics.

**Posting Clinical Information to the EHR-** Ensuring a clinically appropriate and cost-efficient treatment plan required both an easier way for the physician to relay information and adherence to existing ED workflows. For the right information to be timely and accessible, it needed to be posted to the patient's EHR and to the ED tracking board. To accomplish this goal, WakeMed chose to route incoming messages from the PCP to its OneCall Center which is staffed 24/7. OneCall nurses locate the patient's EHR (if existing) or generate a new patient record, quickly post the patient's pending arrival to the ED tracking board and forward the message to the ED staff.

## RESULTS:

Improved ED time to treatment, patient satisfaction, cost of care and higher physician engagement with WakeMed

**Reducing Unnecessary Diagnostics-** Speed, cost and quality of care can be negatively impacted if the ED is not prepared with a patient's history and test results before he or she arrives. Using PH Connect, providers can collaborate to facilitate better coordination of care for their patients, better patient outcomes and better resource utilization in two ways: 1) PCPs can share their clinical reasoning and judgment with the ED physician to streamline decisions about patient care, 2) ED physicians can quickly consult with specialists, providing patient-specific information to ensure a timely and accurate response from the specialty physician. Both of these factors can reduce or eliminate unnecessary diagnostics and reduce time to treatment.

Since WakeMed started using PH Connect, more than 3,000 patients have arrived at the WakeMed EDs with clinical information already posted in the EHR and on the ED tracking board as a result of communication via PH Connect. With an average response time of less than three minutes, PCPs can feel confident that their patient's situation is understood and that their ED experience will be as seamless as possible. Patients wait less, move through the ED faster and physicians can rest assured that their clinical insight to the patient is incorporated into the care plan. A win for patients and physicians.

Wasserman continues, "Before PH Connect, I would call the ED directly and either alert the charge nurse or the ER attending if available. Then I would discuss the case with the provider. OneCall was established to try and help streamline things and was a good starting point. We would call a special number, tell the operator whom we wanted to talk to, have that person paged and wait for a response. PH Connect is much more streamlined."

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