



Client success story

Transforming care models with virtual nursing and scalable, end-to-end technology

Saint Francis Health System

Not-for-profit health system serving Oklahoma

Background

- 2 million people supported across 39 counties
- 12,000 employees

Virtual care offering

- Inpatient virtual nursing

Creating a more sustainable model of care

For more than 60 years, Saint Francis Health System has served its community of Eastern Oklahoma with compassionate, high-quality care.

Like many health systems across the nation, Saint Francis faced staffing shortages and recruitment challenges, especially for nurses in the medical/surgical units at its hospitals. This led to increased financial pressures from rising labor costs, high turnover rates and need for temporary workers. In addition, Saint Francis' leadership felt that its existing model of care, which had been in place for many years, would not be sustainable in the future. *The health system was looking to evolve its care delivery model to provide more efficient, patient-centered care.*

Saint Francis needed to implement a new model of care, powered by innovative telehealth technology, that could empower its registered nurses (RNs) to practice at the top of their license and expand their scope of services. They looked to use Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and nursing technicians at the bedside to support RNs. Additionally, as part of a broader retention initiative, Saint Francis sought to develop a mentorship program that would cultivate its nursing workforce internally, supporting newly licensed RNs and helping LPNs grow their careers within the health system. *Saint Francis looked to Teladoc Health[®] and its innovative technology to embark on a virtual nursing pilot program for three medical/surgical units.*

Results

Improved financial savings

\$900K

in savings to the bottom line from pilot (3 units over 1 year)¹

Identifying a scalable, standardized technology platform

When Saint Francis was assessing its technology needs, the Teladoc Health virtual nursing solution addressed areas where Saint Francis' current platform fell short—from better camera controls to support for acute care settings to full fleet monitoring.

Teladoc Health met Saint Francis' key requirements, including integration with EPIC, standardization to support virtual needs across all service lines beyond virtual nursing and an end-to-end solution with the ability to scale in the future.

Piloting a virtual nursing solution that could become the standard of care

After partnering with Teladoc Health, Saint Francis implemented its virtual nursing pilot in three medical/surgical units. It managed the implementation through three task forces:



IT



Facilities



Nursing

The nursing task force was comprised of IT partners, Teladoc Health clinical and technical advisors, nurse managers and directors. In addition, this task force also included nurse managers of other units that had potential to scale in the future, which was determined to be a best practice moving forward.



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Teladoc Health has been right there with us every step of the way. Their team has brought so much time and expertise to help us build new workflows—this has empowered us to create a more sustainable model of care.”

Cynthia Leathers, MBA-HCM, BSN, RN, Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Saint Francis Health System

The nursing task force was responsible for developing nearly a dozen virtual nursing workflows, including a task-oriented workflow to support the admission/discharge team. These workflows were reviewed by existing bedside unit teams and eventually virtual teams, once hired, to provide input and changes.

Saint Francis hired virtual nurses with five or more years' experience, including some senior nurses who had considered retirement due to the physical demands of bedside nursing. The virtual nursing staff initially worked alongside the bedside nurses, supporting 81 beds across the three medical/surgical units to learn the workflows. The virtual nurses then moved into an operations hub, connecting with patients via Teladoc Health cameras. Thanks to the reliability of the Teladoc Health virtual care technology, these hubs do not have to be located within the units they support. In fact, one hub is 55 miles away from the campus it supports, while still coordinating with onsite staff for case management.

Delivering more efficient, more empathetic care

Just a short time into the pilot period, it was clear that virtual nursing had already transformed inpatient care. With a more efficient admission and discharge process, bedside nurses were able to spend more time communicating with and educating patients and their families.

Virtual nurses completed patient medication history documentation, which gave physicians more accurate and timely information, improving admission time. With virtual nursing support, *the average discharge time was reduced from 90 minutes to 54 minutes across the three piloted units.*¹

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We would not have been successful if we didn't have the Teladoc Health expertise helping us identify swim lanes for different disciplines to drive our overall care. This helped us standardize our model so each unit is operating in the same way.”

Sandi Wagner, MBA, MHL, BSN, RN, Virtual Services Director, Saint Francis Health System



Leveraging their prior experience, the virtual nurses also provided mentorship and support to newly licensed nurses to help grow their skills and ultimately their careers with Saint Francis. This collaborative care model helps grow and retain LPNs, techs and RNs, while also strengthening academic partnerships.

Significant savings due to reduced turnover

Alongside the other retention strategies Saint Francis put in place, the health system's virtual nursing pilot was a key driver of reduced unit turnover, delivering significant savings to the health system. *For the three units over the first year of the virtual nursing program, Saint Francis saved \$900,000 against its bottom line.*

Continuing virtual care expansion

With its proven pilot success, Saint Francis' next step is to scale this model of care across the health system. In 2025, the second phase of the virtual nursing roll out will support 200 beds, including a personal virtual sitter solution. The virtual sitter solution alone is expected to deliver more than \$250,000 in savings to the health system. In 2026, phase three will support an additional 351 beds.

Results

Better patient experience and stronger nurse communication^{1,2}

7.4%

increase in HCAHPS overall rating for units participating in the pilot

Discharge process reduced from 90 minutes to

54 minutes

Reduced staffing turnover¹



UNIT 1
55% to 7%

UNIT 2
44% to 6%

UNIT 3
17% to 12%

¹Saint Francis, "Considerations for Scaling a Virtual Nursing Program," June 2024

²Saint Francis performance of HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) with CMS Benchmarks

*The testimonials and opinions presented are applicable to the client. Each client's exact results and experience will be unique and individual. The testimonials are voluntarily provided and are not paid.

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