



ONPAGE | GUIDE

Six Ways to Improve On-Call Management

On-call management in healthcare is synonymous with antiquated technologies and manual processes, resulting in ineffective clinical communications.

Today's healthcare organizations require an advanced, new way to manage on-call teams, ensuring that patients receive the appropriate treatment at the right time, every time.

To achieve this goal, facilities need to deviate away from spreadsheets, three-ring binders and sticky notes to manage on-call rotations and rosters. Healthcare organizations need to streamline their clinical workflows, ranging from when an on-call physician is notified of a patient issue to when she eventually provides care.

In this guide, we discuss how healthcare organizations can enhance on-call management by adopting an intelligent scheduling platform, improving team collaboration and the patient experience in the process.

Dissatisfaction With Current Processes

Physicians, nurses and clinical specialists are dissatisfied with current communication methods, consisting of pagers and landline phones.¹ This, of course, is in addition to grueling, manual on-call processes (e.g., front

desk staff managing daily on-call rosters). Consequently, communications between front desk staff and on-call physicians are prolonged, leading to poor quality of care. At its core, healthcare teams spend more time attempting to communicate with each other than communicating with patients, who require immediate attention in urgent or time-sensitive situations.



This was the case with SAGE Neurohospitalist, a telemedicine provider of neurological services located in Pasadena, Calif. SAGE relied on pagers for clinical communications. Unfortunately, SAGE's pager use led to a delay of up to 20 minutes in getting a neurologist to review a patient's case.

It was only when SAGE adopted a clinical communications solution—with intelligent on-call scheduling capabilities—that its neurologists were alerted about patient issues in under two minutes. As demonstrated by this case, pagers only complicate clinical communications and on-call management operations.

¹<https://www.computerworld.com/article/3268055/smartphones-becoming-primary-device-for-physician-and-patient-communications.html>

Antiquated Communication Technologies

Organizations spend nearly \$180,000 per year on antiquated, ineffective communication technologies, such as the pager.²

Pagers are insecure as they can be breached by a \$20 dongle.³ This susceptibility is a violation of HIPAA regulations, requiring organizations to pay \$50,000 per PHI breach.⁴ Additionally, the average cost of a data breach is now \$3.86 million.⁵ Pager use equates to monetary losses and legal ramifications for today's healthcare facilities and treatment centers.



In addition to financial losses, pagers lack the ability to use text messaging and have limited cellular range.⁶ As a result, physicians need

two devices (i.e., pager and a smartphone) to communicate and collaborate with their clinical teams.

Pagers cannot escalate critical alerts to other on-call physicians, ensuring that missed pages are always missed. Even worse, on-call teams cannot attach important clinical images or test results to pages. This limits a physician's understanding of patient issues, preventing her from providing appropriate patient care in a timely manner. In other words, the more information available for physicians to facilitate their care of a patient, the better the outcome for the patient.

By moving communication off of pagers and on to secure alerting and mobile messaging platforms (i.e., clinical communications solutions), healthcare organizations can experience significant improvements in outcomes and cost reductions.

The following six methods discuss how organizations can improve on-call management and care team communications.

² <https://www.hipaajournal.com/hipaa-compliance-and-pagers/>

³ https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/news/cyber-attacks/are-pagers-leaking-your-patients-phi?_ga=2.89927899.1979153155.1547751147-317725842.1547751147

⁴ <http://www.hcpro.com/HIM-229707-866/HIPAA-and-the-HITECH-Act-Know-the-level-of-penalties.html>

⁵ <https://www.hipaajournal.com/healthcare-data-breach-costs-highest-of-any-industry-at-408-per-record/>

⁶ <https://www.healthcaredive.com/news/5-basic-hospital-inefficiencies-and-their-quick-fixes/361954/>

One – Enable Use of Smartphone Communication Devices

Improving on-call management begins with the widespread adoption and propagation of smartphone devices in healthcare facilities.

Ninety percent of healthcare organizations have invested in smartphones for clinical communications, while 73 percent are planning to develop mobile strategies.⁷



Smartphones facilitate the exchange of sensitive information, as they offer fully downloadable, HIPAA-compliant clinical communications platforms. These solutions come in the form of secure mobile applications, offering intelligent alerting and text messaging to enhance team collaboration.

Two – Adopt a Clinical Communications Platform: On-Call Scheduling Capabilities

Clinical communications platforms are equipped with on-call schedules and rotations, allowing organizations to take

scheduling out of the realm of paper and spreadsheets. In its place, care teams can benefit from digital schedules, selecting who is on call and ensuring that there is never a delay in communications.

This solution minimizes physician burnout, guaranteeing that care team members share the workload.

Three – Integrate With Popular Scheduling Systems

A clinical communications platform (i.e., OnPage) integrates with intelligent scheduling systems such as Amion to further streamline operations.

Through the integration, healthcare facilities can give patients instant, 24×7 access to on-call physicians while eliminating the costs associated with expensive call center services.

For instance, organizations can allow patients to be connected to an on-call physician through a live call. In this use case, the patient dials one phone number and is prompted to select a department. The on-call physician will then receive a direct call from the clinical communication platform's system. If the physician answers the call, the system will immediately connect her with the patient on the line. This results in faster patient care and treatment, eliminating long wait times in the process.

⁷ <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/survey-90-of-hospitals->

[investing-in-smartphones-for-clinical-communication.html](https://www.onpage.com/investing-in-smartphones-for-clinical-communication.html)

Four – Extend the Range of Critical Pages and Escalate Alerts

Deliver critical messages even when the recipient (i.e., on-call physician) is without cellular coverage or outside of hospital grounds. With a secure smartphone application, on-call physicians are never too far from the hospital to receive a critical alert. Pages are always received by the appropriate and capable recipients on mobile.

In the case that an on-call physician is unavailable, then the next in-line doctor will receive the critical notification. Alert escalations are pre-determined or pre-configured through a pager solution's on-call capabilities.

Five – Allow Attachments to Enhance Communications

Improved communication is also centered on better exchange of information. In healthcare, much of this information is centered on patient records, X-ray images, prescriptions or doctors' interpretations. By enabling the simple exchange of this information, patient care and treatment is improved.

Unlike the antiquated pager, care teams can distribute and exchange this information with each other through a secure mobile application.

Six – Make Use of Reports and Status Updates

Healthcare organizations can further enhance on-call management by making use

of detailed documents and reports. These are generated and easily accessible through a clinical communications solution, providing incident post-mortem reporting via audit trails and downloadable reports.

With audit trails, care team managers can track the performance of on-call physicians through receipts including when critical alerts were:

- SENT
- DELIVERED
- READ

In this way, management can review the data and make appropriate changes to improve physician performance for future on-call events.

Conclusion

By using intelligent on-call platforms to better manage messaging and alerting of those on the frontlines of healthcare, patients are likely to see better coordination of care as well as better outcomes. Additionally, hospitals are likely to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Effective on-call management platforms, such as clinical communications solutions are essential to driving better quality care both in the short-term and in the years to come.

About OnPage

OnPage's award-winning, HIPAA-compliant incident alert management and clinical communications system for healthcare professionals, provides the industry's only ALERT-UNTIL-READ notification capabilities, ensuring that critical messages are never missed. Through its platform and smartphone app, OnPage helps streamline workflows and improve patient outcomes.

OnPage's escalation, redundancy and scheduling features make the system infinitely more reliable and secure than pagers, emails, text messages and phone calls. OnPage shrinks resolution time by automating the notification process, reducing human errors and prioritizing critical messages to ensure fast response.

Whether to minimize IT infrastructure downtime or to reduce the response time of healthcare providers in life-and-death situations, organizations trust OnPage for all their secure, HIPAA-compliant, critical notification needs.

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