THE TOWNSVILLE HOSPITAL
Complexity to Simplicity

The Townsville Hospital is a public tertiary care hospital in the city of Townsville servicing the entire North Queensland region, with patients from as far as Mount Isa and Cape York being airlifted or transported to the hospital on a daily basis. It has over 580 beds, is a significant tertiary maternity centre, a major teaching hospital of the James Cook University School of Medicine and has the largest Emergency Department in Queensland.

Background

The Hills Health Solutions team has worked closely with The Townsville Hospital for over 11 years. In 2005, the hospital installed LON, one of our early nurse call systems throughout its Parklands Residential Aged Care facility. This system continues to support residents in a 96-bed care environment.

In 2009, the organisation chose the Hills IP7000 IP Nurse Call system for 20 beds in the acute section of its Palliative Care/Hospice.

Biggest Challenges

From initial establishment at its current site in Douglas in 2001 and through continual expansion until 2009, The Townsville Hospital operated at least five different nurse call systems which had little to no integration. This presented challenges for the Building Engineering and Management (BEMS) team who serviced these systems on a daily basis. It first required them to understand the diversity of each system; they also needed available spare parts for each of these systems and were liaising with numerous vendors depending on the section of the hospital requiring maintenance. The issues compounded as some vendors had gone out of business and items from some vendors were no longer being manufactured. Meanwhile, patient requirements and technology had also moved on.

During this period, Clinical staff were confused by the inconsistency of systems which forced them to constantly adapt and work with different types of hardware, buttons, colours and alerts.

The lack of consistency proved an unnecessary distractor in the delivery of care. The same applied for patients who needed to be moved from one department to another.

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Which Solution?

With so much unnecessary complexity, the hospital set about finding a unified and consistent solution that would make things seamless for both staff and patients, and provide cost-effective scalability into the future. For the BEMS team, a highly reliable platform that would enable them to have complete visibility over the system down to end points and simplified infrastructure moving to a common data communications structure, was crucial.

After comparing all available vendors, many of which they already experienced first-hand, the hospital determined that the Hills IP7100 was the only one that ticked all their boxes. Additionally, the hospital appreciated that the system could be pre-programmed and tested in a controlled external environment before being deployed onsite. Essentially, it was about getting these areas reliably operational in the shortest amount of time and avoiding disruption to patients and staff in the active environment. In 2009, the decision was made to gradually roll out Hills IP7100 across the hospital as part of its staged refurbishment and new section build projects.

Results

By 2013, the Hills IP7100 platform had been extended to rest of the 600-bed hospital and today continues to be rolled out into its newest wings.

Having this unified critical messaging system in place has significantly reduced downtime, provided BEMS with visibility across the entire hospital, simplified reporting and made life easier for staff. Essentially, it has allowed all areas to be integrated from the patient to staff communication perspective. Now messages are able to be seamlessly sent across to other parts of the hospital, something that could not be achieved before and staff can concentrate on delivery of care, without unnecessary distractions from technology.

Reference

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