

## Wireless technology driving NHS cost efficiency

The NHS is now seeing some of the most widespread cuts in its history and in the present economic situation the service has to focus on saving billions of pounds over the coming years without impacting negatively on patient care. It seems vital to ensure the NHS saves £20 billion by 2015 while at the same time coping with increasing demand and rising costs.

With this being the case, technology vendors are putting forward their solutions promising a reduction in costs and an increase in efficiency. The largest uptake has been in the adoption of wireless local area networks and Wi-Fi RTLS deployments; hospitals are being transformed as they embrace wireless technology. Wi-Fi deployments in hospitals throughout the UK are enabling doctors, nurses, administrators and security staff to communicate wirelessly.

With working patterns ever changing, the call now is for greater convergence and greater staff mobility and with mobility comes the need to access staff directly whilst they are on the move, creating the need for on-site wireless communication. Gone are the days of paging doctors and waiting for responses to a page they may not be able to respond to. VoWi-Fi solutions, a wireless-based VoIP service, have allowed two-way speech over an existing wireless network infrastructure, letting staff send and receive messages and calls directly with the person they need.

On-site wireless communication improves productivity wherever staff are mobile over a large area and must respond quickly to time-critical information. Patients can be negatively affected by long waits for nurses



and lack of information; this can be avoided by an effective communication solution – through two-way speech, patients can place a call to a nurse who can answer whilst on the move. This is why hospitals stand to gain more from the simultaneous mobility and accessibility of wireless communications than any other industry.

Effective communication between not only staff but staff and patient enables better patient care and helps decrease time spent by staff walking between patients duplicating efforts with the same request.

Considering the size of a hospital and the number of nurses, this time saving equates to many thousands of nurse hours per year which, in return, easily justifies the cost of deploying the wireless network.

Leading supplier of on-site wireless communications Ascom Wireless Solutions understands how Wi-Fi solutions can increase patient care, personal safety and can lead to an increase in staff efficiency in hospitals. Its sophisticated solutions allow monitor alarms, patient alarms and staff attack alarms to be sent wirelessly to one handset, which in turn allows for two-way speech so the patient and staff member can easily communicate with each other.

Ascom's solution also allows for the acceptance, rejection and escalation of alarms so there is always someone available to respond if an emergency situation arises.

Robert Wood, Managing Director of Ascom UK, said: "Hospitals in the past have been sceptical about the reliability and complexity of wireless technology. However, as more hospitals have adopted Wi-Fi and technology has developed, these initial concerns have been overcome."

The initial cost of investment is outweighed by the long-term savings a wireless network brings and the capability of it being future-proof brings about a number of advantages. Using a wireless network as the primary network, instead of a dated wired network, can reduce costs in running cables and switch ports which can mount up substantially.

Hospitals also deploying an 802.11n Wi-Fi network are benefiting from unparalleled speed and performance, faster than the older 802.11a/b/g wireless networks of 54Mbps.

In conclusion, IT decision makers across the NHS are recognising the importance of on-site wireless communication in helping fulfil their strategy of improving levels of patient care, saving time and reducing costs. On-site wireless communication solutions can be a great enabler in reducing costs and increasing efficiency if the right infrastructure can be put in place.

With the NHS being asked to find 4% efficiency savings if it is to maintain care standards at current levels, it is no wonder hospitals are turning to wireless technology to solve these issues.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Ascom's Wi-Fi products and solutions please contact Ascom Wireless Solutions on:

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